UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE POLITICS OF RELIGION IN LEVIATHAN

BY

LINDA VALBORG OLSEN

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled THE POLITICS OF RELIGION IN LEVIATHAN submitted by LINDA VALBORG OLSEN in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS in POLITICAL THEORY.

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ABSTRACT

Parts III and IV of Thomas Hobbes's Leviathan are often ignored or treated as a separate segment of the work dealing with mainly theological concerns. Nevertheless, to consider that these Parts are intended as a serious contribution to theological debate renders them as either inconsistent with the political Parts I and II or insincerely appended by Hobbes to avoid censure as an atheist. Another viewpoint will be developed in the thesis: that Leviathan, Parts III and IV ought to be interpreted as being profoundly political, not just theological, in motivation and content and thus entirely consistent with the first half of the work. Parts III and IV can be seen as the culmination of Hobbes's efforts in Leviathan to discredit the widely-held notion that churchmen have a right to ecclesiastic authority independent of the sovereign's supreme authority in the commonwealth. When treated in this way, Hobbes's exposure of illegitimate ecclesiastic claims to authority need not be interpreted as an indictment of religion itself.

Chapter I introduces the thesis argument and provides a brief review of Leviathan, Parts III and IV.

Chapters II and III demonstrate that Hobbes's efforts in support of sovereign ecclesiastic power evolve from and complement concepts presented by the predominantly political chapters in the first half of Leviathan.

Chapter IV contains a model of Hobbes's civil and ecclesiastic commonwealth illustrating his view that the churchmen's pretensions to authority cannot be fitted into the commonwealth's hierarchical structure. Through reinterpretation, however, elements of religion, including the clergy, have a place in the model.

Chapter V discusses the intended audience for Hobbes's promotion of sovereign ecclesiastic authority in the commonwealth, and some implications of this campaign including reaction from the sovereign's political rival, the ecclesiastic establishment.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Parts III and IV make up nearly one-half of the text of Leviathan,[1] yet they are rarely discussed in the critical literature and are either ignored or treated as a separate segment of the work dealing with theological concerns. Because Hobbes demonstrates his belief in the importance of ecclesiastic power in Leviathan's sub-title, "The Matter, Forme, & Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill," it would seem to be negligent to ignore these sections.

To treat Parts III and IV as though they raise mainly theological questions, nevertheless, poses a dilemma. The reader can accept Hobbes's Scriptural exegesis as an expression of his piety and a serious contribution to theological debate as some commentators have done, notably Hood, who writes: "It now seems to be reasonable to view Hobbes as a Christian thinker . . . peculiar in combining Christianity, materialism, scholasticism, and mechanism."[2] Otherwise, she must discount a major part of Leviathan as a retreat from Hobbes's political stance in Parts I and II and, therefore, as either an inconsistent theory or an insincere attempt by a renowned atheist ("the monster of Malmesbury") to ingratiate himself with a Christian readership.

Another viewpoint can be taken, however, and will be argued in this thesis: that the latter part of Leviathan, with its promotion of sovereign ecclesiastic authority, ought to be regarded as profoundly political and not just theological in its motivation and

content, and therefore entirely consistent with Parts I and II. The thesis will argue that Parts III and IV (which readers often consider oddly placed in a work of political theory, considering their theological themes) are neither tangential to the first half of Leviathan nor cynically appended to his "real" political discussions so that he might avoid public censure. They represent, instead, the culmination of Hobbes's ongoing efforts to offset the imbalance of power on the side of the ecclesiastic establishment: power, he argues, that must be considered illegitimate. Hobbes's obvious hostility toward religious extremism need not be considered as an indictment of religion generally. Throughout his work, personal expressions of faith coexist with an aversion to religions which challenge civil power's authority.[3]

In defence of this view, although the standard objection today to Hobbes's Leviathan is to the authoritarianism of the sovereign, the objection in Hobbes's time came more from the clerics who wanted to retain control of ecclesiastic power rather than yield it to Leviathan. The ecclesiastics' power was buttressed by the belief throughout Christendom that the church was the institution that "knew" religious truth, was authorized to interpret divine will and therefore ought to be obeyed. This belief, in turn, was strengthened by fearsome sanctions that the clergy were capable of exacting against those who resisted their power.

Brian Fay writes, in Social Theory and Political Practice, that a political theory must take into account the inherent power of firmly-held beliefs.[4] The *idée fixe* that Hobbes seeks to discredit in Leviathan, Parts III and IV is the widely-held notion that churchmen have a right to ecclesiastic authority independent of the sovereign's supreme authority in the commonwealth. Such a belief, nevertheless, can be relieved of its power through exposure of its incoherent and self-contradictory nature. Like the clockwork analogy which Hobbes uses to dissect the commonwealth [81], his method conceptually takes apart and examines religious beliefs. Hobbes asks the reader to consider how his religious beliefs arose. How, by whom, and for whose benefit have they been sustained?

Hobbes is well aware that because people's beliefs are part of their self-conception these ideas ought not to be condemned. Resistance to change can be effected, instead, by suggesting alternative interpretations without destroying a belief itself, "extract[ing] from . . . false ideas implicit truths."[5] Part of the belief system for a Christian citizen, of course, is the prophetic religion of the Bible.

A common view of Parts III and IV is to interpret Hobbes as giving Scriptures short shrift. Warrender, for instance, writes that since Hobbes does not refer to Scriptures as the primary source of political obligation in the Christian commonwealth and gives the sovereign authority over their interpretation, "their significance is limited."[6] (Such a view gives strength to the position, which the thesis will refute in Chapter IV, that Hobbes is cynical in his use of Biblical texts.) In citing Hobbes's rueful comment on preaching,[7] Warrender, I feel, confuses Hobbes's statements about Scriptures with statements about ecclesiastics and the state of religion generally. To Hobbes, of course, Scriptures are not the same as preaching. Although he notes with displeasure the general quality of preaching, he is genuinely appreciative of the educative possibilities (not properly exploited) of Scriptures in the modern Christian commonwealth.

How do recent Hobbes scholars view Leviathan, Parts III and IV? Renewed interest in Hobbes studies occasioned by the commemorations of the 400th anniversary of his birth and 300th anniversary of his death has resulted in a spate of major Hobbes works, yet a survey of those produced in the last decade and a half reveals that none seriously considers the essentially political objective of Hobbes's discussions of religion in Leviathan. Jean Hampton's exhaustive examination of Hobbes's social contract theory, for instance, acknowledges the obligation implied by the laws of nature but does not examine the political implications of prophetic religion.[8] Neither Gregory Kavka[9] nor Tom Sorell considers Parts III and IV,[10] nor does D.D. Raphael's study of

Hobbesean morals and politics (described by its author as an introduction of Hobbes to new readers) explore Hobbes's treatment of the politics of religion.[11] Von Leyden's book on political obligation[12] and Rosenthal's recently republished philosophical study[13] draw connections between Hobbes's thought and that of Locke and Spinoza, respectively, without giving attention to Parts III and IV; Rosenthal is emphatic, moreover, that God has no place in Hobbes's commonwealth, nor is there a place for "the candor and the triviality of mythology, where everything is cheerfully acknowledged to be foolishness."[14] The thesis will demonstrate in Chapter IV that Hobbes's commonwealth, on the contrary, is a society in which both Scriptures and a binding myth can find a home.

Two recent Hobbes texts are valuable resources for their attention to religion in Leviathan, although their approaches differ.

Richard Tuck's Hobbes presents a wide-ranging survey of the philosopher's thought, based on a variety of sources.[15] The author makes the valuable point that Hobbes intended his views on religion to engender political debate, and notwithstanding his attacks on the Catholic and Presbyterian clergy, he clearly wanted Leviathan to unsettle the Anglican establishment. Tuck's criticism that Hobbes compromises his theory by leaving authoritative interpretation of public doctrine to the church rather than the sovereign,[16] unfortunately, overlooks Hobbes's important redefinition of "church", pivotal to his theory of authorization of sovereign ecclesiastic power. In Chapter III, the thesis shows how Hobbes overcomes the perceived difficulty raised by Tuck's critique.

David Johnston's The Rhetoric of Leviathan,[17] as the title suggests, emphasizes the author's interest in Leviathan's polemical qualities. Johnston interprets Parts III and IV as rhetorical adjuncts to Parts I and II, and presents Hobbes's motive in writing Leviathan as a direct approach to the public in order to effect cultural transformation. It is hard to criticize Johnston's view that Hobbes seeks to impact his ideas directly on the

reader's psyche, a notion especially attractive and coherent to 20th century readers. But Johnston does not address two pragmatic considerations, in my view.

In Hobbes's time, as in the present day, public opinion may have been influenced, but would not have been transformed, by a book or even several books. Fay comments in this regard that it is unrealistic to "think that the simple presentation of ideas will foster a change in social actors' self-conceptions."[18] Johnston's study, committed to an interpretation of Hobbes's goal as the communication of ideas through their psychological appeal to the individual, curiously ignores the clear political implications of Hobbes's rhetoric promoting the sovereign as communicator of ideology. (As early as Leviathan, Chapter 23 [291], Hobbes recommends public teaching of civics in the commonwealth.) Without the support of a sovereign with the power to effect change, Hobbes is well aware that Leviathan's political theory could not flourish.

Johnston comments that in writing extensively about religion Hobbes seeks to diminish it and the people's dependence upon it, anticipating that eventually religion will wither away in the commonwealth.[19] In Johnston's interpretation of Parts III and IV, the need for Scriptures will be outgrown just as prophecy has become outmoded and foolish to rational thinkers. The thesis will argue that, on the contrary, Hobbes does not view Scriptures as expendable, but as a renewable resource when correctly interpreted. Hobbes's personal desire for a minimal religion as an ideal is acknowledged; nevertheless, in Leviathan, Chapter 12 Hobbes suggests that religion is a human need that would spring up everywhere even if all known religion were forgotten overnight. His theory of sovereign ecclesiastic authority has universal applications wherever the power blocs of religion and commonwealth collide.

It is evident that none of the recent books about Hobbes has done a thorough examination of prophetic religion or its political slant in Leviathan. The only exceptions filling this gap in the literature are two short articles which appear in different sources.

The first of these, by James Farr,[20] is in a volume of essays responding to what its editor, Mary G. Dietz, describes as neglect of "the interpretive premise that Hobbes was, first and foremost, a political thinker and that his writings were, first and foremost, political acts."[21] Farr's work is insightful because it recognizes the political character of Leviathan, Parts III and IV. Farr, clearly disappointed that Parts III and IV are not written from a coherent theological stance, nevertheless, finds Hobbes's use of Scriptures unpalatable. He criticizes Hobbes for passing over obscure Scriptural texts "in silence" and for selecting Scriptural texts he wants for the purposes he chooses. Farr's other major criticism is that Hobbes does not adhere to the stated goals expressed in Part III's summary passage. Farr attempts to apply Hobbes's summary statement [626] as a general rule and is unsuccessful in fitting Hobbes's Scriptural interpretations into it. Although the passage's stylistic properties are not widely recognized today, the statement which Farr identifies would be understood by Hobbes's contemporaries as a rhetorical tool,[22] not as Leviathan's *modus operandi*. Farr's useful commentary is marred, in my view, by these criticisms. His article will be addressed in greater detail in Chapter IV.

Another interesting essay shedding light on Hobbes's political approach to religion is written by Rosamund Rhodes.[23] Her stated intention is to use Parts III and IV as a standard for testing interpretive analyses which study motivation in Hobbes's moral theory. Rhodes notes the continuity between the first half and Parts III and IV of Leviathan, and valuable comments she makes concerning Hobbes's political application of Scriptures, unfortunately, are not extended because of constraints imposed by the article form.

Because of the enormity of the material in Parts III and IV, my discussion of these Parts necessarily must be limited to the thesis topic: the politics of religion in Hobbes's Leviathan. I hope that the following brief review of Parts III and IV will be

useful in demonstrating my argument that they reflect a stance which is not a departure from the political first half of Leviathan.

A. Review of Leviathan, Parts III and IV

Hobbes concludes Part II of Leviathan with Chapter 31 in which he identifies a major problem for citizens of a Christian commonwealth and those whose task it is to govern them: How are subjects of a commonwealth to balance requirements of the divine Laws of Nature and of secular law without offence either to God or the commonwealth? He goes on to address the question of these conflicting claims to allegiance in Parts III and IV of Leviathan.

Part III, entitled "Of a Christian Common-Wealth," comprises twelve chapters. In them, Hobbes employs the methodology of deliberative rhetoric, or political oratory, outlined in his earlier work, The Whole Art of Rhetoric.[24] Some of that art's accepted persuasive techniques which he uses are a defence of the soundness of the subject matter to be discussed, establishment of the speaker's credibility and motive, and a denunciation of the position of the adversary. Hobbes employs the device of presenting as evidence numerous Scriptural examples, which would not be considered as reliable elements of logical reasoning but are perfectly acceptable in rhetorical speech and writing.[25]

He declares that the principles of Christian politics are founded on Holy Scriptures which provide "all rules and precepts necessary to the knowledge of our duty both to God and man" [414], and that the word of God in Scriptures takes precedence over any private claims of religious inspiration. Thus, he validates the source of the subject material from which he will draw his rhetorical "proofs".

To establish credibility as a student of the Bible, Hobbes indicates that he is thoroughly familiar with its texts and with major Scriptural analysis. From his survey of

this material, he has concluded that Scriptures' authority must be established by the message, or "light," contained therein. Hobbes continues the practice established in earlier chapters of Leviathan of proposing definitions as a means of precise reasoning to discover this message. He redefines terms essential to Christian doctrine and what it is to be a Christian. In so doing, he seeks to allay the fear of pious citizens which he has raised by his argument that the necessary qualities for Christian salvation do not contradict the qualities of a politically responsible citizen of a Christian commonwealth.

The longest chapter in Part III is Chapter 42, entitled "Of Power Ecclesiasticall," nearly five times the length of the next longest chapter. Hobbes's thorough understanding of Scriptures is demonstrated in this most political of chapters, as he stakes out his ground as a Bible scholar. He questions the wording of early canons, which he considers as not authentic to the time in which they are said to have been written [554]. Reexamining Scriptural texts in the original Greek, he declares that their meaning has been skewed in translation. He identifies metaphor and allegory which mistakenly have been interpreted literally. By his display of religious knowledge, Hobbes seeks to undermine the schoolmen's claim to superiority in Biblical interpretation and to the means of Christian salvation.

In Chapter 42, Hobbes declares his stand against division of power in the commonwealth, countering a number of points made by Cardinal Bellarmine, a leading Catholic theologian of the day. Hobbes presents a case for the concept of church and state being one entity and for a sovereign's primacy over his particular "church."

Part III concludes with Chapter 43, entitled "Of what is Necessary for a Mans Reception into the Kingdome of Heaven," in which Hobbes addresses the question he raised in the last Chapter of Part II. The difficulty of obeying the commonwealth's commands without disobeying God can be resolved only by a determination of what is required of a Christian citizen. Hobbes sees organized religions as power bases making

incredibly difficult demands on their adherents, and comments in this regard that "if an inward assent of the mind to all the Doctrines concerning Christian Faith now taught, (whereof the greatest part are disputed) were necessary to Salvation, there would be nothing in the world so hard, as to be a Christian" [617]. The only two requirements for Christian salvation, he writes, are righteousness, or "the will to give to every one his owne, that is to say, the will to obey the Laws" [611], and piety expressed through loving God and one's fellow-citizen as oneself. The burden of obedience to churchmen is thus removed.

Part IV of Leviathan is only about one-half the length of Part III and consists of four chapters and a "Review and Conclusion". In it, for the most part, Hobbes thoroughly castigates the Roman Catholic church and the Presbyterian establishment, but indicates that his criticisms are equally applicable to wrong-headed churchmen of all denominations who have pretensions to political power.

The style of Part IV is more strident than that of Part III, with the aim of exposing how organized religion illegitimately holds Christians in its thrall by exploiting their fear of everlasting death. Using Scriptures as his source, Hobbes counters Papal claims that the Kingdom of God is an existing jurisdiction with an earthly representative of God. Hobbes launches a vigorous attack against the credibility of "a confederacy of Deceivers" whose misinterpretations of Scriptures have extinguished the light of religious knowledge, acting to "dis-prepare men for the Kingdome of God to come" [627-628]. Hobbes thunders that Christianity, especially the Roman Catholic strain, has become a religion cluttered with demonology and other relics of heathen religions with the result that its doctrines resemble unbelievable old-wives' tales.

Hobbes's denunciation of superstition in religious doctrine thoroughly discredits the invention of purgatory and the notion of incorporeal body, but does not go so far as to destroy the Christian concepts of the Resurrection or of soul.[26] He chides the

supporters of erroneous doctrine for not recognizing that God's magnificent power of creation will allow Him, if He will, to resurrect both body and soul together.[27]

Having argued earlier that sovereign ecclesiastic power is morally defensible and authoritative, in Chapter 47 of Part IV Hobbes invites the reader to conclude, with him, that the benefit of spiritual ignorance, or "darknesse," accrues to its authors, the churchmen, and not to Christians generally. Hobbes's discussion suggests that sovereign ecclesiastic power, on the other hand, satisfies the interests of ordinary citizens who are both the authors and beneficiaries of the actions of the commonwealth.

Hobbes ends Leviathan, Part IV with "A Review and Conclusion" which serves as the epilogue of his rhetorical presentation.[28] Here he is conciliatory in tone, expressing optimism that despite the potential for conflict based on the "contrariety of mens Opinions, and Manners in general" the human race has the capacity for balancing the vagaries of human nature and civil duties.

Taking into consideration the unease felt by Christians at the prospect of revisionist Scriptures, Hobbes writes in defence of his motive that his works are neither revolutionary nor contrary to the word of God. He points out that ancient writers of Biblical texts contradicted themselves and each other, that the testimony of these writers has been corrupted by oral transmission, and that some men's purposes have been to attach their own corrupt doctrines to religious doctrines previously approved. Rational reinterpretation of Scriptures, therefore, ought to be preferred over ancient error.

B. Thesis Argument

If the review of Parts III and IV leaves some doubt of the thesis claim that the latter half of Leviathan is indeed largely political, and not theological, I would like to

suggest that Hobbes's efforts here cannot be fully appreciated unless they are seen as employment of his political theories presented in the first half of the work.

In these Parts, Hobbes develops several basic claims in support of sovereign ecclesiastic power which evolve from, and complement, concepts presented in the predominantly political chapters in the first half of Leviathan. The continuity of Hobbes's arguments can be noted from parenthetical references in the thesis text taken from Leviathan, Parts I and II.[29]

The thesis will develop a two-pronged approach in examining Hobbes's political attack on the churchmen's claims to ecclesiastic authority.

In Chapter II, I will show that Hobbes employs concepts about the nature of both man and knowledge which he developed in the first half of Leviathan to weaken the claim to superior knowledge of God on which the ecclesiastic establishment's reputation has been built. I will present two grounds on which Hobbes bases his campaign against the pretensions of organized religion to wield political influence: (1) the approximate equality of all men, including clerics (with its reverse image of their approximate inequality to achieve agreement about virtue); and (2) the synthetic nature of much of what passes for knowledge, including knowledge about the Creator.

Next, in Chapter III, I will show that Hobbes's employment in Leviathan, Part III of concepts such as the mechanisms of representation, authority, command and unity introduced in the first half of Leviathan are meant to expose the illegitimacy of the ecclesiastic establishment's pretensions of authority to command individual citizens and sovereign leaders alike.

In Chapter IV, I will assemble a model of what Hobbes considers a commonwealth should be. With his recasting of religion's place in its organization, the model illustrates graphically how the churchmen's illegitimate claims to authority cannot be fitted into the hierarchical structure of a Christian civil and ecclesiastic

commonwealth. Newly reinterpreted, Scriptures's place in Hobbes's model of the modern Christian commonwealth is assured. However, in order for the commonwealth to function successfully the myth of Christianity will not be permitted to do battle with the myth of the founding of commonwealths. Hobbes's harsh criticism of prophets in Leviathan will be reconciled with the substantial claims he makes elsewhere in the work for the legitimacy of the sovereign's roles of chief prophet and chief pastor in the civil and ecclesiastic commonwealth.

Finally, Chapter V will consider the intended audience for Hobbes's campaign in support of the sovereign as ecclesiastic decision-maker for the commonwealth, some implications of this campaign, and its political fall-out including reaction from Leviathan's political rival, organized religion. I will argue that the attention Hobbes pays in Leviathan to rational conclusions and their opposite, absurdity, can be applied to demonstrate the absurdity of a conclusion that the artifice of religion has a life and power of its own apart from the life and governance of the commonwealth.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

[1]Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, ed. C.B. Macpherson (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1965).

Hereafter, all references to this work will appear in parentheses within the body of the thesis text.

[2]F.G. Hood, The Divine Politics of Thomas Hobbes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. viii.

[3]Richard Peters, Hobbes (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1956), p. 29; also Richard Tuck, Hobbes (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 77.

[4]Brian Fay, Social Theory and Political Practice, Controversies in Sociology, 1 (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975), p. 98.

[5]ibid., p. 99.

[6]Warrender, Howard, The Political Philosophy of Hobbes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), p. 228.

[7]ibid.

[8]Jean Hampton, Hobbes and the Social Contract Tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[9]Gregory S. Kavka, Hobbesian Moral and Political Theory (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

[10]Tom Sorell, Hobbes (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986).

[11]D.D. Raphael, Hobbes: Morals and Politics (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1977).

[12]W. von Leyden, Hobbes and Locke (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982).

[13]Henry M. Rosenthal, The Consolations of Philosophy, ed. with an Introduction by Abigail L. Rosenthal (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989).

[14]ibid., p. 193.

[15]Tuck, Hobbes.

[16]ibid., pp. 85-86.

[17]David Johnston, The Rhetoric of Leviathan (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986).

[18]Fay, Social Theory and Political Practice, p. 90.

[19]Johnston, The Rhetoric of Leviathan, p. 181.

[20]James Farr, "Atomes of Scripture: Hobbes and the Politics of Biblical Interpretation," in Thomas Hobbes and Political Theory, ed. Mary G. Dietz (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1990), pp. 172-196.

[21]Mary G. Dietz, Thomas Hobbes and Political Theory, ed. with Introduction (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1990), p. 4.

[22]Thomas Hobbes, The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury, ed. Sir William Molesworth, vol. 6: The Whole Art of Rhetoric (London: J. Bohn, 1839-1845), p. 488; 502; 510.
Further references to the Molesworth edition will be noted as E.W.

[23]Rosamond Rhodes, "The Test of Leviathan: Parts 3 and 4 and the New Interpretations," in Thomas Hobbes de la Metaphysique à la Politique, ed. Morton Bertram and Michel Malherbe (Paris: Librairie Philosophique, J. Vrin, 1989), pp. 193-220.

[24]Hobbes, E.W., vol. 6: The Whole Art of Rhetoric, p. 427 ff.

[25]ibid., p.424.
In his discussions of rhetorical proofs Hobbes, like Aristotle, considers that although the kind of evidence in rhetoric differs from logical proofs it is evidence, nonetheless.

[26]Johnston (The Rhetoric of Leviathan, pp. 149-150) interprets Hobbes's theory as requiring denial of the existence of soul.

[27]This will answer the complaint by Tuck (Hobbes, pp. 90-91) that Hobbes has not resolved the problem of the disposition of souls.

[28]Hobbes, E.W., vol. 6, The Whole Art of Rhetoric, p. 510.

[29]Parts I and II of the Macpherson edition of Leviathan cover pages 85-408.

CHAPTER II

THE CREATION OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE

Citizens in many jurisdictions of the world rejoice in the separation of church and state with its liberating effect on religious expression. Leviathan's promotion of sovereign ecclesiastic power, therefore, raises the apprehension of modern Christians who see in its absolutism a dangerous threat to individual liberty. In his own time, Hobbes's promotion of Leviathan as ethical decision-maker and religious interpreter for the commonwealth affected his contemporaries negatively, as well, but his theory was seen not so much as a danger to individual liberty but as an irreverent challenge to the primacy of the ecclesiastic establishment as the repository of religious knowledge, as if "Charles II . . . was to decide whether the world had a beginning."[1]

A shadow of this attitude, which has the characteristics of a taboo protecting the the clerics' version of religious truth, falls on modern times, as well. Religious knowledge is usually considered the property of theologians because of their alleged moral and intellectual superiority in this area. That there can be certainty in religious matters is another automatic assumption made by many Christians.

Leviathan's criticisms strike at the heart of the ecclesiastic establishment's claim to pronounce religious doctrine authoritatively. Hobbes's presentation of revelations as recorded in Scriptures in no way sustains priestly claims of independent authority to develop a body of religious knowledge. Hobbes suggests, in fact, that it is not what is known about God, but His inscrutability, that predicates the requirement for an

"authority" to dispense knowledge about Him.

In this Chapter, I will show that Hobbes's political attack on the churchmen's reputation as fonts of religious knowledge is based on positions he develops in the first half of Leviathan. Chapter 13, wherein Hobbes argues against a national hierarchy of mankind, lays the groundwork for concluding that there can be no natural ecclesiastic authority. In Part I, Hobbes presents human capacities and the nature of knowledge in certain ways. What people know is tinctured by individual passions and filtered through individual experience; moreover, because what *can* be known with certainty is limited, all sorts of knowledge including religious knowledge is bound to contain elements which are arbitrarily decided.

A. The Nature of Man

Hobbes's view of man recognizes the approximate equality of people. In Leviathan, Chapter 13, he writes that observable differences in physical strength or mental acuity are evened out by man's ability to overpower his fellows (if not always by strength, then by stealth or in collaboration with others). Thus, there is no support for claims to natural superiority for any person.

At the same time, what sets people apart are individual passions which make them desire and shun different things, graphically exemplified by their inability to achieve agreement about what is good and evil. What one person "denominates in his mind as desirable may never coincide with any one else's idea of the good."[2] This negative kind of equality can be observed in the diversity of men's opinions and of private appetites (even within the same person on different occasions). As Hobbes explains, "the same man, in divers times, differs from himselfe; and one time praiseth,

that is, calleth Good, what another time he dispraiseth, and calleth Evil: From whence arise Disputes, Controversies, and at last War" [216].

All people (including priests and theological scholars) are not only equally incapable of understanding or agreeing about the word of God, but equally unable to speak by right of natural ecclesiastic authority. The zeal of the churchmen's certainty obscures the fact that this is so; nevertheless, a belief that clerics are endowed with superior intellect or moral capacities has no validity. Clerics are "no lesse subject, not only to Ambition, but also to Ignorance, than another sort of men" [569].

B. The Nature of Knowledge

The subjective nature of individual interpretations of sensory impressions and experiences dictates that none of them ever can be the whole truth. Hobbes writes that in the pursuit of truth one comes to a point of either deciding that it has been attained, or yielding to evidence presented and accepting it as conditional knowledge [131]. There are some questions, moreover, for which no definitive answers are available and, in these cases, there is developed a body of knowledge that is decided upon. Because the mystery surrounding the Creator precludes all knowledge of His precise nature and His divine will, Hobbes considers that religious interpretation must be included in the category of arbitrary knowledge.

The process leading to its development properly belongs in the area of conflict resolution adhering to the one or group holding decision-making power in the commonwealth. The covenant which creates the sovereign as an "artificial soul governing life and motion to the whole [artificial] body" of the commonwealth" [81] empowers the one or group holding sovereign power arbitrarily to create a public

religious "truth" in the same manner as any other decided-upon truth is created. Hobbes writes that "the Right of Judging what Doctrines are fit for Peace, and to be taught the Subjects, is in all Common-wealths inseparably annexed" [567].

This need not lead the reader to despair that "the Civil Magistrate become[s] now the onely ground and pillar of Truth"[3] or to conclude that his guideline must be: "Let men agree what is to be truth, and truth it shall be."[4] Instead, Hobbes recognizes that in decision making concerning religion, as in other aspects of life, "no discourse . . . can end in absolute knowledge of fact, past, or to come" [131].

Hobbes's view of the nature of man, and of knowledge itself, upholds the notion of religious knowledge as an artifice of public policy. Why, he asks, should the ecclesiastic establishment hold a monopoly on religious truth, when there is no evidence to support such a claim, and so much evidence to the contrary?

C. The Language of Religion

In the communication of information, individual apprehensions of reality are necessarily defined and interpreted by words. Ayer writes, in The Problem of Knowledge, if words, "the signs which I employ to record the way things look to me," are to be at all meaningful to others their use must comply with a public rule.[5] Hobbes advances the notion of the sovereign as the coiner of the commonwealth's linguistic currency through standardized meanings within the body of knowledge "decided upon". Just as the languages of law and science are subject to standardization by authority, a standardized language of religion with definitions and rules to explain righteous and unrighteous, the attributes of God and appropriate forms of public worship is required in the commonwealth. This language of religion is a creation of the ecclesiastic authority.

Hobbes's principle that there ought to be standardized meanings upheld by some central authority is not always well received, but does not warrant the criticism that Hobbes seeks to "stifle thought with language" by recommending a "dictatorship of the neologist."[6] On the contrary, I will show that Hobbes's principle illustrates his recognition that words and speech set the parameters of ideas. Hobbes has written that speech is the noblest and most useful invention made by humankind, the development of which has facilitated all our other faculties [100]. Speech organizes mental processes marvellously, allowing us to affirm, to categorize, to compare and contrast, and to evaluate. Words fill life with meaning. Nevertheless, Hobbes clearly establishes that they are merely signs, and naming words is an invention or artifice. The notion that words and definitions - artificial constructions - are one hundred percent accurate and truthful is maintained as a fiction only [106].

It is a rare gift is to be free from equivocation "and to find out the true meaning of what is said."[7] Yet we persevere, because communication is what makes us social creatures. The inexactitude of words ought not to frustrate us from attempts at the most correct naming in imitation of Cratylus who, it is recorded, "having resolved never to make a statement of whose truth he could not be certain . . .was in the end reduced simply to wagging his finger."[8] Nevertheless, misunderstanding and conflict inevitably occur because words are not only ours but the signs used to convey the opinions and intentions of others.

Hobbes writes that while "the invention of names hath been necessary for the drawing of men out of ignorance" it has also led mankind into error.[9] Inconstancy and diversity of naming lead to distortions of speech and knowledge. As these distortions become accepted, they inhibit the acquisition of knowledge. People often make assumptions without reasoning about them thoroughly, and the registration of thought and assumptions from wrong principles, repeated and compounded, becomes as

comfortable as an old shoe. Without careful reasoning, what we so easily believe fits our needs trips us up.

Incorrect naming is also capable of real damage. Sometimes, linguistic errors are innocent as when people register thought inconsistently. At other times they are deliberate, when people communicate with the intention to deceive or confuse. To tarnish organized religion's claim of superior knowledge of God and His attributes, Hobbes must show that the churchmen's misuse of language, both careless and deliberate, obstructs precision and rationality in religious knowledge. He then will add the serious charge that organized religion fails in its role of promoting human understanding of God's word.

In Leviathan, Hobbes describes the word of God in two different ways. In one sense he writes about it as word *about* God [452], and in the other sense as word *from* God [451]. When used in the first way, Hobbes means the doctrine of religion: what is imagined about God's nature and accepted as belief, and the forms of rational worship associated with that belief. His other consideration of the word of God referring to "the words spoken by God" [ibid.] requires an examination of the method of divine communication and some mechanism for verififying what has been communicated. In the following sections I will examine both meanings of the word of God, as Hobbes has done, to discover the foundation of his political argument against the churchmen's claim to right of ecclesiastic power.

D. Word About God

Statements about the Creator are important to Hobbes's political argument because, in order to weaken the church's claims to sole exercise of the ecclesiastic

function in the commonwealth, he must present both an alternative to the traditional "picture" of God and a renovated body of religious knowledge.

God is clearly part of the equation in the civil and ecclesiastic commonwealth about which Hobbes writes. Even if all that can be said with certainty is that what we call God "is" [430], Hobbes suggests we can use as proof of His existence the effects of that existence: "the visible things in this world and their admirable order" [167]. We can imagine God in the same way

> as a person born without sight might imagine fire, when being brought to warm himself by the same, may easily conceive, and assure himself there is somewhat there, which men call fire, and is the cause of the heat he feels; but cannot imagine what it is like" [ibid.].

In this chapter I will illustrate with examples Hobbes's view that the First Creator is not an artificial construct, although human attempts to name and define His characteristics are necessarily artificial.

1. The Body Argument

Hobbes is clear that God's form and location cannot be defined, contrary to Mintz's statement that Hobbes says "plainly enough that . . . God is part of the world" and therefore body.[10] Some time before writing Leviathan, Hobbes had grappled with a consideration of "first matter", postulating that although not equivalent to "body," it is a useful attempt to name something unknowable. He describes first matter as "not any body distinct from all other bodies; nor is it one of them. What then is it? A mere name, yet a name which is not of vain use for it signifies a conception of body without the consideration of any form or other accident. "[11]

Just as a conception of body is not body, a conception of God is not God; nevertheless, Hobbes considers these terms to be useful if only for confirming that God

is, and identifying what God is not.

In discussing universe and its relationship to body, Hobbes writes that "there is no reall part [of the universe] that is not also Body; nor anything properly a Body, that is not also part of (that aggregate of all Bodies) the Universe" [428], and that body "in the most generall acceptation, signifies that which occupyeth space . . .[and] is a reall part of that we call the Universe" [ibid.]. To Hobbes, then, God is not a body in the general understanding of the word and therefore not a part of the Universe.

From a logical standpoint, (even as any creator stands outside his creation or work of art), God cannot be a product of His own process. Because He is outside His creation, the Universe and everything in it, the term "body" cannot be applied to Him. Moreover, Hobbes describes God as infinite, and because what is infinite has no parameters, God cannot be contained in a universe. Being outside all knowable relations, the Creator of a universe may have any form or no form; that is, there could be an unknown dimension or no conceivable dimension to the Creator as Hobbes writes of Him. To turn God into an abstraction by asserting that "the world is God" [401] or "the world was not Created, but eternall" incorrectly denies God's existence as cause of the world [402].

Contradiction arises when Hobbes appears to concede, in arguing with Bishop Bramhall, that God is body.[12] It is likely that in debating with the cleric, Hobbes felt he had no choice but to argue on his opponent's terms and along his line of argument. Stephen takes this view, saying that Hobbes's failure to dispute with the churchmen "the doctrine that. . . [God] is corporeall or an infinitely 'subtile' matter occupying space is merely a quaint attempt to evade the more natural inference that He is simply outside of all knowable relations."[13]

(2) Rational Worship

Hobbes considers it rational to worship God although we cannot comprehend Him [430]; worship's value lies in its maintenance of faith in a higher power. Hobbes cautions that the very act of worshipping God is subject to the risk of dishonoring Him which has, as its unfortunate result, the diminishing of faith [403-406]. Care in the composition of prayer need not reduce prayer to a "bloodless abstraction."[14] On the contrary, Hobbes considers that stylized public prayer - simple, decent and rational - encourages the habit of honouring God [405]. Extemporaneous displays of "sudden", "light" or "Plebeian" worship [404], however, do not. Hobbes abhors incoherent speech in worship, mocking reports about the Prophet of Delphi, for example [458]. (Hobbes probably would be astonished to find that in these days, instead of his hoped-for future rationalization of religion, the practice of "speaking in tongues" is considered in some quarters as an alternative to set forms of worship.)

In condemning spontaneous fervor in prayer Hobbes runs the risk of reducing pleasure associated with worship and rendering his stance politically unappealing. But he considers that the flight from rationality which religious enthusiasm entails looms as a greater risk to his argument. Worship's continued value as a viable practice depends on the worshipper's rational understanding of what it is he does when he prays. For this reason, as he writes in Behemoth, Hobbes approves of the Church of England's Book of Common Prayer, with its established form so that worshippers might realize to what they were to say "Amen".[15]

Hobbes explains that the purpose of prayer is not to effect results [403]; belief that mankind is capable of calling up God's help through prayer (nurtured by the ecclesiastic establishment) purports to control God, although He is not in mankind's power to control. Job, who cries out to God bewailing his fate, receives God's answer not because he asks or because he suffers, but because God decides to reply.

What does it mean, then, when a worshipper approaches the Creator with attributes of honour? According to Hobbes, these attributes are merely attempts to honour One whose potential for what one calls good is indescribably great. Without under-valuing the importance of honouring God, nonetheless, saying that "God is infinitely more mercifull than men" [496] is to use a descriptive phrase as an expression of piety and not of fact. "Mercy" becomes the best word at one's disposal to describe God's potential power of leniency. Saying that "all good things proceed from God" [615] also must be understood as an appropriate expression of reverence, not of known fact.

(3) God and Justice

The usual sense in which Hobbes describes God's judgments is as neither just nor unjust. Since we have no contract with God, what the Creator is capable of dispensing is not performance of contract (justice), but measures befitting His enormous power such as revenge, mercy, and free gift. Unlike the case of contract, where performance of what is promised is our due, in free gift we "merit by the benignity of the Giver" [195].

Applying the term "just" to God [403] is an example of honouring Him, because God cannot be "circumscribed within the limits of our Fancy" [ibid.] and judged by human measures of just and unjust. Hobbes's point is echoed in Thomas Hardy's poem, "New Years Eve," in which a mortal complaining to God about the unjust condition of the world receives His reply:

> Strange that ephemeral creatures who
> By my own ordering are
> Should see the shortness of my view
> Use ethics tests I never knew
> Or made Provision for.[16]

Man's curiosity leads him to question causes of events, and to seek reasons for the good and evil which befall human beings. Attributing events to an unseen hand, nevertheless, leads him into error because it is nearly always impossible to trace where in the chain of human events the cause of man's ills or his good fortune lies [406]. It is impossible to tell whether these occur naturally as consequences of specific actions or of other events or situations (for example, folly or misdeeds), or merely are coincidental.

Hobbes concludes that although God has the power to both punish and grant reprieves to humans, it cannot be shown with certainty that this power actually has been wielded, for the same reason that one cannot be sure of the original cause of any occurence. Thus, it cannot be proven that God steps in and moves the actions of the world, rewarding one action and punishing another. Notwithstanding the parable of Job, God does not break the silence to apologize, praise, berate or explain.

God's silence does not deny the existence of a Higher Power nor does such an existence depend on man's willingness to believe He exists. Arguments that treat God as though He were a person who fits into tidy rules of command and consent are disputations which add nothing to our understanding of our relationship with Him. Unlike our relationship with our sovereign wherein we have a choice to consent or not because there is liberty to act (even if the consequences are frightful), Hobbes argues that with God there is no such choice even if we think there is. Hobbes describes the relationship between mankind and the First Mover as a natural rather than consensual one, based upon His irresistible power, the same obligation that would have bound Abraham even in the absence of his covenant with God. Hobbes explains: that "whether men will or not, they must be subject alwayes to the Divine Power. By denying the existence, or Providence of God, men may shake off their Ease, but not their Yoke" [395].

In acknowledging the reserve power of divine revenge, Hobbes is not necessarily

being ironic, or employing it for its value as a social sanction. It is rational to feel awe when contemplating divine power, in his view, because God's powers of mercy and revenge are exercises operating outside human guidelines by One with limitless and irresistible power.

Hobbes's discussions suggest that it is only through the commonwealth that concepts of even-handed justice and equity are attainable. Whereas God's gifts and revenges are not attributable with any degree of certainty, the sovereign has within his mandate the power to render justice and equity, the effects of which can be immediately experienced and understood.

(4) God and Goodness

To illustrate that it is irresistible power and not God's benevolence which commands obedience, Hobbes offers as rhetorical evidence the parable of Job. When God afflicted Job, he found no sin but "justified the Affliction by arguments drawn from his power" [398] because God holds the right of punishment "not as Creator, and Gracious; but as Omnipotent" [397]. Such a view raises a profound human concern about whether "arbitrary action on His part [is] consistent with a benevolent and righteous God."[17] It poses threats to existing religious doctrine, and prompted accusations by Hobbes's contemporary critics that he blasphemes God by declaring Him to rule the world not lovingly, but merely by irresistible power.[18]

Hobbes's elevation of power as the only estimable effect of God purposely neglects any consideration that we ought to feel gratitude for God's goodness. The problem, as Hobbes would see it, is that gratitude involves evaluating what it is we receive, but we cannot judge God or anticipate and feel gratitude for His rewards because we have no sure proof of God's good acts. Rather than basing our relationship with God upon gratitude for his benevolence, we must base it only on what is

comprehensible: the power of the One who is the the highest power of all powers, and our own insignificance in comparison.

Hobbes considers philosophical debate about whether what is good for mankind is from God, or what is from God is good for mankind (although they may be interesting) are not profitable. Engaging in hair-splitting arguments to discover the nature of God and establish his goodness is both absurd and irreverent.

It is absurd because a creation does not create its creator, yet in a fruitless desire to know Him, mankind tries to recreate God in man's image. Furthermore, it is absurd to assign human limits and attributes to the infinite and unknowable by believing that God is limited to seeing and hearing as humans do. Hobbes quotes from Scriptures the Prophet David "Shall he that made the eye, not see? or he that made the ear, not hear?" [459] to illustrate his point that in the way He has of observing us, God observes us; likewise, in the way He has of communicating his will, He communicates His will [463].

Moreover, Hobbes declares that the notion that God has a human-like form is outrageously irreverent, for to "consider that because God made all parts of mans body, that he had also the same use of them which we have; which would be many of them so uncomely, as it would be the greatest contumely in the world to ascribe them to Him" [459]. This statement probably is not ironic, on account of Hobbes's delicacy of manners and apparent religious conservatism. (However, it may also be a rhetorical appeal to the passions of that segment of his audience who share his distaste at any such effrontery to God.)

(5) Loving God

Hobbes never explicitly states that it is impossible to "love" God, but by extension of his discussions in Leviathan and elsewhere such a conclusion might be drawn and yet not be deemed irreverent.

To explain my supposition, Hobbes has said that, having no conception of the Creator, we are unable to prove anything about the shape and form of what it is we name as God. Concepts lead to memory. Because we cannot form a concept of God and because memory is a repository of past impressions, we can have no memory of God. With no memory of God, there can be no image of Him in the mind that was not put there by a human agent.

By extension, because love is delight with the image or conception of the thing loved[19] and God is inconceivable, it is possible to conclude that even though we ought to feel humility with respect to God, to love Him (or to love Him in the same way, or more than, we love our fellow humans) is not logically possible. Not feeling toward God what passes for love is something a Christian might feel guilty about, yet he need not because such a "failure" of feeling cannot be considered as sinful. Hobbes redefines love of God by tying it to justice. He explains that, according to Scriptures, Christ makes the expression of acting justly equivalent to love of God [611].

Hobbes's credibility as a Bible scholar is never completely assured. For the most part, his attempts to discuss *what* God is not are mistakenly taken for declarations that *God is not.* Although this is an area of persuasion wherein he fails to convince, it is also an area wherein he identifies a great weakness of church doctrine: the intellectual poverty involved when representations become taken for what they represent, and forms of worship for what is worshipped, as though the scaffolding around a building were the building itself.

6. Exposing Religious Error

Hobbes exposes some mainstays of traditional Christian doctrine as fraught with error and superstition in order to loosen the bonds that tie his readers to irrational religion. In this section, I will discuss several traditional interpretations which Hobbes

targets in this way.

(a) Martyrdom:

Hobbes's arguments denigrating martyrdom have as their aim the reduction of its seductiveness. In sharp contrast to what organized Christianity preaches, Hobbes considers that rather than being praiseworthy, martyrdom properly ought to be attributed to ignorance of what it is to be a Christian.

It is an erroneous presumption to consider anyone in recent history a martyr, Hobbes writes, because a "true martyr" is an eyewitness to the resurrection of Christ [529] and there are no longer any such persons on earth. A willingness to seek martyrdom in a society where people are of one mind on the essentials required for salvation suggests a kind of vainglory, in contravention of the divine laws of nature. For anyone else to laud martyrdom is absurd. (The only exception might be in the case of a missionary who has contracted to preach to infidels and has suffered death in the tour of duty.)

Examined logically, an aspiration to martyrdom is not only absurd but unnecessary. One cannot be a martyr in opposition to other believers; by their belief in Christ and a desire to live peaceably in society, they already have demonstrated all that is necessary for salvation and there is no need to proselytize in their company. Why would one need to profess faith to extremes, setting oneself up higher than one's fellow-citizens? If, on the other hand, an act of martyrdom is meant as an act of civil disobedience: that is, if such action causes one to "make warre upon [the sovereign]" [625], it is both a breach of the law of nature counselling peace, and a breach of the covenant founding the commonwealth to which all citizens, including Christians, are bound. How, then, Hobbes asks, can one rationally expect a divine reward for martyrdom?

Moreover, because beliefs, principles or causes are not grounded in certainty, it becomes profoundly irrational to be willing to face death or suffering on account of them. Christians must avoid "the Napkin of an Implicate Faith" [409] - an all-encompassing faith that sweeps everything up and doesn't discriminate - because it denies the value of all the important elements of one's individuality: sense, experience, and God-given reason. To ignore these elements and be willing to die for every ambition of the clergy is absurd [530].

(b) Miracles:

The designation of "miracle" to a natural or supernatural event has always required official verification by the public reason of God's vicar [477], the one or group holding ecclesiastic power, to determine if "a real miracle or "the Act of a tongue, or pen" [ibid.] has taken place. Unlike magic, which is a prepared event intended to deceive because it purports to control supernatural power, a miracle can be described as a prepared interpretation of an event or alleged event. A miracle's greatness is determined by its aims; if it is designed to discourage political obedience by fomenting revolt, an event cannot be credited as a miracle [412-413].

We are free to believe or disbelieve that a miracle has occurred despite its "official" verification [477-478]. As a general rule, reasonable persons ought to be suspicious about claims of miracles because the uncertainty surrounding these alleged occurrences, which depends on the viewer's knowledge and experience, renders miracles unreliable as indicators of God's word. Since miracles are rare, most often such alleged events cannot be esteemed extraordinary, on account of the frequency of their reporting [633-634].

How can the reader reconcile the doubt Hobbes shows concerning miracles with his statement that God gave Moses miracles to help him govern? Hobbes's

characterization of reason as God-given talent and as the unwritten word of God suggests that his interpretation of Moses's divine communication (whose purpose was to keep together a community fragmenting politically and in their faith) came not mystically, but through his reason and a desire to teach righteousness. This supposition will be explored further in my discussion of God's word at the end of this chapter.

(c) Spirit:

In Hobbes's view, the supernatural aspects of religion are capable of rendering Christian citizens ungovernable. Hobbes questions the credibility of anyone who would trivialize God's graces with interpretations defining spirit as a supernatural infusion, and sets out to demystify "spirit" by substituting a materialistic interpretation of its meaning as it appears in Scriptures.

Hobbes tells us that our impulses come from within, not from without, for they originate in the passions (or on occasion from illness, madness or hallucinatory experiences). For example, in Scriptures (1 Sam 18:10) where it is said "And the Evill spirit came upon Saul, and he Prophecyed in the midst of the house," the prophet was either fevered or under the effect of a mind-altering substance such as a poison or gas. In all its other Scriptural references, spirit should be interpreted to signify either the human life force or "some extraordinary ability or affection of the Mind, or of the Body" [433] that causes us to act in ways showing an inclination to His service [465]. In any place where spirit is not rationally definable, Hobbes considers that it can be dismissed as an "idol" of the brain [429].

The political implication of Hobbes's redefinition of spirit is that a person cannot say, in truth, "The Devil made me do it," attempting to relieve himself of responsibility for his acts by the disclaimer that they were impelled by supernatural infusion of a spirit directing his inclinations toward good or evil. Ascribing responsibility for one's actions

to the Devil or spirits is not a plausible excuse for wrongdoing, in Hobbes's view, and it reduces man's fitness for civil obedience.

Hobbes describes man's will as a "rationall appetite" [402], which directs his actions. Since there is no divine direction as to what man must will (by his creation he is given only the means to will), each time he wills, he has liberty to to do so, or refrain from doing so. With no other-worldly control over man's will, he is free to behave in a politically responsible manner or, if he does not, to risk punishment both by the community and from divine retribution.

(d) Angels:

Hobbes finds that, as used in Scriptures, the word "angel" means messenger in all cases. He concedes in Chapter 34 of Leviathan it is possible that rare, timely messages from God are revealed by messengers in bodily form whom we call angels. These bodily mesengers, however, are not like the angels we may dream of or imagine when God raises them supernaturally "in the fancie of men, for his own service" [435]. It is essential to Hobbes's argument that the messengers bearing God's word be substantial and mobile beings having dimensions and occupying space [434]. Angels, therefore, are either material persons whom the world calls angels or they are products of our imagination, but never disembodied spirits, "in no place; that is to say, that are no where" [ibid.].

Hobbes's acknowledgment of the possibility of angels (whether serious or not) does not imperil his firmly-held stance against the possibility of incorporeal bodies, but is only a concession that that there are some things which are unarguable or about which there is no point to argue. More important to Hobbes than ruminating about these messengers is to consider the message which they deliver. In this connection, his discussion of the proper appearance of angel wings: "Usually they are painted, for the

false instruction of common people" [437] is not, as it appears, an example of wild pragmatism but exemplification of his stance that "it is not the shape; but their use, that makes them angels" [ibid.].

Hobbes considers that whereas anyone may privately decide that a messenger is an angel, only the holder of ecclesiastic power is authorized to make an official pronouncement to that effect, basing the determination on the quality of the message. The necessity of validating angels by their purpose is consistent with Hobbes's characterization of miracles and the necessity of validating them by their purpose, discussed earlier in this chapter.

It is incorrect to consider a message to be divinely inspired because it is purported to have been delivered by angels or via miracles. Instead, a message can be accepted as delivered because of its "divine" character. Hobbes's explication of angels declaring that the authority of the message validates the authority of the messenger, and not the other way around as generally taught, counters firmly-held tenets of religion in general and Christianity in particular [619]. It is designed, nevertheless, to turn the supernatural basis of religious knowledge on its head.

E. Word From God

Part III, Leviathan raises the question: when Christians look for God's message in Scriptures how can they know what is the word of God? Hobbes comments that history, "the only proof of matter of fact", does not identify the writers of Scriptures. Nor does reasoning, which "serves only to convince the truth (not of fact but) of consequence", provide complete certainty about their origins [416-417]. Varied claims to supremacy of interpretation, moreover, create doubt and confusion as to the meaning of God's word.

Hobbes writes that one cannot be certain that the supernatural experiences recorded in Scriptures are authentically God's direct communication any more than we can know that purported supernatural experiences told to us are revelations from God without having received them immediately. According to Scriptures, God appears not as an imagined figure but as a Voice "testifying God's speciall presence" [436]. But whose voice carries the message, and is this voice a voice such as we can imagine or a figurative expression to indicate transmission of some kind? I will show that Hobbes intends the latter meaning.

When he writes about word of God as received word, Hobbes does not consider it to be actual speech, for he has written that it is a fallacy to attribute man's characteristics to God. Moreover, he discredits both visions and dreams as immediate divine communications. (Since people are not at all sure when they are asleep or awake, to say that God spoke to us in a dream is in fact to say that we dreamed that God spoke to us [411]). Instead, Hobbes leads the reader to infer that the word of God refers to prophecy and revelation rationally accepted by the community of believers as well as conclusions reached by a high level of human reasoning.

Since there can be no disembodied spirits, Hobbes suggests that revelations are received by movements of the mind, and thus they are products of man's reason. The revealed word of God or revelation (the illumination of something formerly cloaked in mystery) can be characterized as inspired reason: that is, reason applied in the service of God, and so perhaps a combination of heightened reason and the appetite to teach righteousness gave the ancients the disposition of mind to write the texts relating what was useful to men concerning the way to live [440].

Hobbes has left open the possibility of God's message being delivered through a combination of reason and imagination: a flash of "spontaneous" insight. Such a concept, though widely appreciated, is hard to explain in words but aptly though

superficially depicted by cartoon illustrators who draw a flashing light bulb over the head and an "Aha" coming from the lips of the cartoon character. (This depiction has been somewhat validated by modern physiology's discovery of neural activity as "sparks" in the brain.) These effects of reasoning, or "revelations", though visionary in one sense of the word, have been wrongly interpreted as supernatural transmissions.

Who communicates God's word in the commonwealth? Because the inclination to do God's service is analogous to speaking according to God's will and because the inclination to do God's service is obviously present in many ordinary citizens, what would prevent every person from adequately interpreting and communicating God's laws after his or her own fashion? Merely an inclination is not sufficient to justify a wide-open policy regarding preaching and teaching, in Hobbes's view.

Hobbes argues that a modern state cannot function effectively if every citizen, and especially if every preacher, claims access to superior religious knowledge and counsels disobedience to public policy based on his interpretation of Scriptures [499]. The sovereign must prevail,

> for when Christian men, take not their Christian Soveraign for Gods Prophet; they must either take their owne Dreams, for the Prophecy they mean to bee governed by, and the tumour of their own hearts for the spirit of God; or they must suffer themselves to bee led by some strange Prince; or by some of their fellow subjects, that can bewitch them, by slander of the government, into rebellion. . .destroying all laws . . . [and reducing] all Order, Government and Society, to the first Chaos of violence and Civil Warre [469].

If the sovereign must prevail in the interpretation of religious knowledge, by what authority does he assume ecclesiastic power? Hobbes cites Scriptural precedent with the example of the authority of Moses; nevertheless, in view of Hobbes's antipathy to precedent [323], any suggestion that Christians in the modern day ought to be bound by a precedent set by Moses, a ruler in "God's special kingdom," is unsatisfactory.

Because of the variety of human passions and levels of reasoning, religious interpretation like other disputatious issues must be resolved by a public decision-making process. Some of the citizens' "fellow subjects that can bewitch them . . . into rebellion" are the ecclesiastics whose objections to sovereign power pose a threat to the sovereign's leadership. In the churchmen's stead, Hobbes presents the sovereign as ecclesiastic authority in the commonwealth, not on account of any innate superiority but as the chosen final arbiter of all controversy in the commonwealth. Hobbes asks the reader to consider: Without verifiable supernatural transmission of God's word and in the absence of proof of the ecclesiastics' natural ecclesiastic right, by what higher moral or intellectual authority may anyone claim to know God's word?

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

[1]Sir Leslie Stephen, Hobbes (London: Macmillan & Co., 1904), p. 150.

[2]Miriam M. Reik, The Golden Lands of Thomas Hobbes, (Detroit:: Wayne State University Press, 1977), p. 89.

[3]John Bramhall, A Defence of True Liberty, 1655 (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1977), p. 253.

[4]W.G. Pogson-Smith, Philosophy of Hobbes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), p. xii.

[5]Ayer, A.J. The Problem of Knowledge (London: Penguin Books, 1956), p. 59.

[6]Pogson Smith, Philosophy of Hobbes, pp. xi-xii.

[7]Thomas Hobbes, The Elements of Law, ed. Ferdinand Toennies, (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1969), p. 21.

[8]Ayer, The Problem of Knowledge, p. 52.

[9]Hobbes, The Elements of Law, p. 22.

[10]Samuel Mintz, The Hunting of Leviathan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 45.

[11]Thomas Hobbes, Elements of Philosophy Concerning Body, in The Metaphysical System of Hobbes, selections by Mary Whiton Calkins (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Co., 1948), p. 68.

[12]Thomas Hobbes, An Answer to Bishop Bramhall in Hobbes' Tripos in Three Discourses, no editor (London: J. Bohn, 1840), p. 306.

[13]Stephen, Hobbes, p. 155.

[14]Mintz, The Hunting of Leviathan, pp. 42-43.

[15]Thomas Hobbes, E.W., vol. 6: Behemoth, p. 194.

[16]Thomas Hardy, "New Year's Eve", quoted by C.E.M. Joad in Good and Evil (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943), p. 49.

[17]Steven J. Brams, Superior Beings, If They Exist How Would We Know? (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1983), p. ix.

[18]Bowle, John, Hobbes and His Critics: A Study in 17th Century Constitutionalism (London: Jonathan Cape, 1951), p. 183.

[19]Hobbes, The Elements of Law, p. 60.

CHAPTER III

AUTHORIZATION OF ECCLESIASTIC POWER IN A CHRISTIAN COMMONWEALTH

The previous chapter concluded with Hobbes's placement of ecclesiastic authority firmly within the sovereign's overall political role. I will now argue that Leviathan, Parts III and IV, although loaded with Biblical references and phrased in the "majestic rhythm of the Authorized Version of the Bible,"[1] looks to the social contract developed in the first half of the work for the source of sovereign ecclesiastic authority.

In this chapter I will show that Hobbes grounds "the power to preach Christ and teach his Doctrine [to] advance his Kingdom" [521] in the covenant authorizing the sovereign to represent the multitude "so far-forth as is in their Commission but no farther" [218-219]. I will present Hobbes's arguments against claims by organized religions to independent ecclesiastic power in the commonwealth, together with his charge that the churchmen's challenge to sovereign ecclesiastic authority must be viewed not only as politically disobedient but contradictory to the teachings and example of Christ and the Apostles.

A. The Jurisdictional Arena

Hanna Pitkin's discussion of the "locus of sovereignty" has pointed out the

necessity of determining "which of the persons (or groups) claiming to command . . . actually has authority to do so."[2] In a similar vein, Hobbes writes that before deciding which rival power group to obey, one needs to know "who it is that speaketh . . . and upon what occasion" [302]. The citizen of a commonwealth ought to employ reason to discover the nature and extent of the political commitment she has made.

In Leviathan, Part I, Hobbes writes that "a Person, is he whose words or actions are considered, either as his own, or as representing the words or actions of an other man" [217]. By licensing the sovereign, or artificial person, of the commonwealth to act as their representative [218-219], citizens of a Christian commonwealth have authorized him to represent their words and actions. Hobbes explains that citizens are largely ignorant that the sovereign authority which they have authored includes the right to ecclesiastic authority in the commonwealth. They mistake their commitment and "see not . . . to whom they have engaged their obedience" [630] when they allow ecclesiastics to compel obedience to church doctrine "for Laws, as absolute Governours" [423].

Hobbes's declaration that ecclesiastic power has been usurped from Christian sovereigns flies in the face of common thinking, because churchmen have always been seen functioning in the role of Scriptural interpreters and pastors. I will argue, however, that Hobbes is adamant that even where sovereigns through neglect or even dereliction of duty have abdicated ecclesiastic authority, there is in truth no division between ecclesiastic authority and sovereign authority generally. The separate terms, "temporal" and "spiritual" government, have been fabricated by the ecclesiastics to make "men see double, and mistake their Lawful soveraign" [498-499]. In this chapter I will demonstrate that, to Hobbes, the administration of religion in the commonwealth is a secular, not a spiritual, concern and that right to ecclesiastic authority is inextricably tied in with sovereignty - the bundle of rights associated with the locus of power.

B. Consent for Sovereign Ecclesiastic Power

From Hobbes's discussions of consent, it can be seen that sovereign ecclesiastic right comes about not merely by default, by virtue of being part of the sovereign's bundle of rights. To understand how Hobbes derives the obligatory nature of sovereign interpretation of divine law from the people's "submission" through covenant, it will be necessary to first examine how he defines submission. Hobbes considers submission to authority to be a voluntary act - not submission of intellectual capacity, but of will to yield "where obedience is due" [410]. Because sovereign right exists through individual, purposeful acts of will, there is a case to be made *against* ecclesiastic power in the hands of the churchmen because consent for that exercise of power has not been given. The ecclesiastic establishment's ultimate control over religious interpretation has never been authorized by the community of Christians, as it has been for sovereign ecclesiastic power.

Nor does conversion to Christianity imply obligation to the churchmen. Devotion or service to God is not the same as devotion or service to the ecclesiastic establishment. Hobbes explains that a preacher is like a debater or an attorney pleading a case before the courts, trying to make an impression through persuasion on the hearer. It is the faith of the hearers and not the power and authority of the teachers that convinces people to receive Christian doctrine. Their conversion is only conversion to a belief or Article of Faith, and thus a promise to themselves, not to the one who persuaded them. To illustrate this point, Hobbes writes that in a Christian commonwealth where the sovereign has authorized preaching of the Christian faith, the sovereign subjects himself not to the pastor who converted him but to God [552].

The citizens of a Christian commonwealth have not consented to the establishment of any secular authority over them besides the sovereign power. A cleric

(unless he is also the sovereign) cannot command obedience because his power has not been authorized by the people of that particular political jurisdiction.

C. Deflating Political Pretensions of Organized Religion

I will show that to reinforce the notion of Church as the sovereign's creature, Hobbes argues forcefully against organized religion's political claims to command citizens in a Christian commonwealth. The claim to an independent power structure with the right to interpret religious truth and punish enemies of the church, buttressed by widespread notions of the spirituality of churchmen and their practices, poses serious threats to the sovereign's ability to govern. Of the aspects of organized religion's claims to authority which Hobbes confounds, perhaps the most fundamental is the pretension to a constituency, because without a constituency all real power is non-existent.

I will identify separately the churchmen's major claims to authority, and explain how Hobbes has laid them to rest.

(1) Pretensions to Spirituality

To validate sovereign ecclesiastic authority Hobbes, first of all, must invalidate the other-worldliness of church practices by piercing the aura that shields organized religion from criticism. To persuade the Christian reader to cast off her belief that to challenge ecclesiastic authority is sacreligious is a difficult task, however; as R.H.S. Crossman explains, the mystique of the church is embedded in "the universal culture of Christendom and the institution[s] which gave that culture its framework."[3]

Hobbes begins by demystifying superstitious belief surrounding the ordination of clergy through the ceremony of laying on of hands. There is nothing inherently sacred

about the ceremony, he comments. It is a traditional form of designation, with roots in heathen practice, meant to symbolically "Offer, Give, or Dedicate, in pious and decent language and gesture, a man, or any other thing to God" [633]. Laying on of hands eliminates doubt as to who or what is to be consecrated to God's service, because "to design a man, or any other thing, by the Hand to the Eye, is lesse subject to mistake, than when it is done to the Eare by a Name" [572]. (Aaron, high priest of the Jews, is said to have laid hands on a bullock and a ram to designate them for sacrifice [ibid.].)

Hobbes denies that consecration involves the supernatural transmission of God's "spirit" to designated teachers of Christian doctrine. God's spirit is already in their material minds before the ceremony of consecration because the desire to preach demonstrates that those who personify the Holy Ghost are full of the Holy Ghost - the spirit (or movement of the mind) to do or teach God's work [573]. Moreover, those who enter holy orders are not holy by any right of their own but by their duties which, being reserved for the work of God, may be denominated as holy. Thus, although designated clergy are said to have been "called" by the Holy Ghost, the ceremony of consecration ought not to be understood in a supernatural way. As interpreted by Hobbes, consecration is as earthbound as a handshake.

(2) Pretensions to an Internal Power Structure

Next, I will show that Hobbes must deflate the belief that Christian citizens ought to respect the artificial hierarchy within church organizations: a politically dangerous belief because an artifice conferring titles, powers and rights to itself seeks to draw power away from the sovereign.

Hobbes's method is to denounce the power-building tendencies of the churchmen, and he offers examples from Christian history in order to compare religion's elaborate structures to the simple origins of Christianity. In its infancy, pastors and

church workers were elected by the churches, that is, the assemblies of Christians of various cities [559]. All church titles meant "teacher," and referred to equal offices wherein workers employed their various gifts in ways useful to the church. Despite the diversity of employment within assemblies, there were no grounds for one church worker to claim supremacy over another. The people would have thought it strange, Hobbes writes, to imagine their bishops being chosen in any way other than by election [560].

Hobbes's unfavourable comparison of church magnificence where pastors not only live off their flocks but are "their own Carvers" [566] with the early Christian church's subsistence on the benevolence of its followers [565-566] is a veiled threat that the sovereign has discretion to curtail the church's financial base, both on account of a sovereign's paramount right to property decisions within the commonwealth and as the rightful head of the church.

Hobbes is clear that there is, in fact, only one chain of authority in the commonwealth, headed by the sovereign who alone has the power to interpret divine law and incorporate it into the commonwealth's civil law.

(3) Pretensions to a Constituency

The question arises: how can the commonwealth's political leader be the head of the church, or flock of believers? To answer, it will be necessary to show that Hobbes redefines what it is to be a Christian. A Christian is not part of a universal community embracing the whole body of Christians, but a member of a specific political unit in which one sometimes may be free to practice one's faith publicly but is always free to observe it privately.

Tuck comments that in ascribing ecclesiastic power to the sovereign Hobbes has not resolved the problem surrounding the church's role in authoritative interpretation of

Scripture.[4] I will show, however, how Hobbes has overcome this difficulty by reinterpretations of "church," in numerous passages of Leviathan, which make the church not a separate entity within the commonwealth, but equivalent to the commonwealth.

What Hobbes introduces in Chapter 31 [405] and expands upon in Part III concerning unity of the commonwealth in public worship parallels what he has written earlier in Leviathan about political unity in the person of the sovereign [220]. Like the commonwealth, the Church can be conceptually envisioned as one person [497], the "company of men professing Christian Religion, united in the person of one Soveraign" [498] who has the power "to will, to pronounce, to command, to be obeyed, to make laws, [to absolve, to condemn] or to do any other action whatsoever" [497-498]. Without this unity, the person of a church has no authority, will, reason, or voice [427].

How can the sovereign, who is the unity of the commonwealth, also be the unity of the church? The linchpin of Hobbes's theory giving the sovereign ecclesiastic authority as part of his power package is that the people of the commonwealth represented by the sovereign are the same people who make up the church. "A Church and a Common-wealth of Christian People, are the same thing" [576], "for both State, and Church are the same men" [575], and "the Church is the same thing with a Christian people" [596].

Hobbes anticipates, nonetheless, that there will be arguments turning his notion of unity of church and commonwealth against him: for instance, in support of universal Papal power. He declares that incursions by any organized religion transcending national boundaries must be seen as important threats to political sovereignty. In order to dismiss the belief that all clergy, kings and other persons comprise one universal commonwealth [601], Hobbes demonstrates that claims to universal power are based on error.

One such error is the teaching that the Kingdom of God is "the present Church now on Earth" [708]. Correct Scriptural interpretation, Hobbes writes, establishes the Kingdom of God as a future, not a present, kingdom. Another major error is belief that the Pope is vicar over all the Christians of the world (whether Catholic or not) and over all Christian nations because "Christ hath some Lieutenant amongst us, by whom we are to be told what are his Commandements" [705]. (The word "Christendom" itself implies such a claim.) In Hobbes's argument, however, unless a community of believers in a particular political jurisdiction has declared the Pope or the head of any other church its civil sovereign, its members are not obliged to him.

(4) Pretensions to Infallibility

To combat the persuasive strength of the principle of Papal infallibility, Hobbes attempts to render the Pope as powerless (and fallible) "as any man that professeth Christianity" [585]. Hobbes rebukes Cardinal Bellarmine for interpreting Scriptures to support claims that God has given evidence and truth (which is almost infallibility) to the Pope. Correctly interpreted, Hobbes says, the specific text (Exod 28:30) contains no such conclusion but is an "Admonition to the Priest to endeavour to inform himself cleerly and give judgment uprightly," not in itself a proof of infallibility [ibid.]. Hobbes's reading of Scriptures concludes that they confer no greater power to the Pope than is granted to any ordinary Christian.

Human infallibility is an impossibility, in any case. Even highly intelligent people are deceived by their experience and by the blurring of that experience in memory. A forceful insistence on infallibility is itself an indication of faulty reasoning. Unless one can be absolutely certain of all the groundwork leading to a conclusion - that correct reasoning and correct definitions have been applied in all stages of the process - there is no basis for believing that any conclusion is totally correct.

Moreover, infallibility is not a claim Hobbes feels needs to be made in support of sovereign right. Even if the teaching of a pope or bishop were completely free from error this would not give him the jurisdiction of a sovereign ruler who has sole authority to command citizens of a commonwealth. The civil sovereign acting in his ecclesiastic role is not infallible, but authoritative. He will sometimes err in the formulation of laws, and in such cases, Hobbes explains, the principle requiring adherence to the laws is not that the citizen must believe them to be right but that he is morally obliged to obey them [591].

(5) Pretensions to a Right to Punish

I will argue that Hobbes regards organized religion's claim to a right to punish, even to "depose Princes and States . . . for the Salvation of Soules," as extremely threatening to the maintenance of civil order [599] and that churchmen, being teachers of religious education only, have no right to punish. A citizen cannot be refused baptism or expelled from a community of believers unless the sovereign, the only one with power to declare or enforce excommunication, decrees it, because "where there is no power to Judge, can there bee any power to give Sentence" [539].

If a Christian sovereign or even a whole Christian state is declared to be excommunicated by the Pope or any other foreign power, the excommunication has no legal force because there is no civil power to support the edict. Neither is excommunication by an independent religious body within the commonwealth of any effect, because all churches in a state properly are under the authority of its sovereign power [541-542].

Following Hobbes's reasoning, churchmen can never declare their Christian sovereign to be shut out of a community of Christians, for he is their lawful representative. For the head of the church to be excommunicated he would have to

punish himself, which is an absurdity. For the ecclesiastics to excommunicate him would be treason.

Hobbes's argument for sovereign ecclesiastic authority strips the ecclesiastic establishment of the powerful sanction of determining who is "in" and who is "out" of a community. Without a right to command, churchmen cannot exclude any citizen from the church/polity, and their excommunication or refusal of baptism to members of the commonwealth become meaningless acts.

At any rate, Hobbes comments, clerics have no logical or moral grounds for refusing baptism to those professing repentance (whether such profession is sincere or not) for how can anyone know the inner workings of belief [533]? He concedes that excommunication on account of injustice (for example, leading a scandalous life according to community standards) sometimes may be appropriate, but in such cases the decision is made by the church, meaning the assembly or its representative. In a remarkably anti-establishment interpretation of excommunication, Hobbes writes that although a cleric may pronounce the verdict, it is the assembly that makes the judgment [534-535]. The pastor is merely the spokesman.

Excommunication never can be justified on account of theological differences where a person's foundation of Christian belief remains unaffected. Thus, no obedient Christian subject is susceptible to excommunication [540]. Hobbes cautions, moreover, that punishment over minor points of doctrine tends to weaken religion by making the doctrine burdensome to men. Besides being unnecessary in most cases, there is something inherently hostile in excommunication in that it dissolves charity in a community [539]. Hobbes writes that error in understanding the commonwealth's overarching authority leads to rivalry of organized religions with the political entity. Jurisdictional disputes over ecclesiastic matters affect the Christian citizen negatively because of his perception of a conflict between obligation to God and to the

commonwealth, which does not really exist.

D. Depoliticizing Christ and the Apostles

Hobbes's charge of disobedience to divine teaching throws down the gauntlet to the ecclesiastics. He challenges them to deny that by their rivalry with the sovereign they have failed to follow Christ's example. Hobbes's position is careful to present Christ as apolitical, unlike views which point out that the conflict of loyalties which Christ's words and actions provoked are clearly political. Christ was not King on earth while he lived, but a Messiah or messenger who "came not to judge the world, but to save the world" [515] and who counselled obedience to the authorized secular leader [Chapter 41]. When properly modeled after Christ's example, Hobbes writes, the role of Christ's ministers is not to judge or proclaim secular law or compel non-believers "to obedience by the sword" [551], but to persuade people to a belief [ibid.]. In acting otherwise, churchmen fail to show a true Christian attitude.

Hobbes presents a picture of Christ and the Apostles as rhetoricians who employed persuasion only [525], having no mandate to command obedience to Christian doctrine [551]. Thus, when they and the disciples went into potentially hostile territory, whatever they preached was not command but counsel because their commission contained neither authority over the people to whom they preached nor authority to preach in opposition to the current governing body to whom the congregation already owed political allegiance by covenant [ibid.].

Hobbes's description of the state of Christianity, before "Kings were Pastors, or Pastors Kings" [545] resembles a doctrinal state of nature insofar as no Christian civil power had been established and no Christian tenets proclaimed as part of secular law.

With no legal commission (matters of legal interpretation being part of the administrative structure of a commonwealth), the Apostles could not command but only counsel. The early Christian Church, of course, made its own determination of the correctness of religious interpretation, yet each follower could be his own interpreter and there could be no sole interpretation "stood to" [ibid.]. It was not until civil sovereigns became Christians that ecclesiastical authority to whose interpretations Christians were bound came into existence.

The commission of the Apostles and all the churchmen who have followed them is to act in subordination to the authorized sovereign in his dominion: that is, *jure civili* (in the right of the civil sovereign), not *jure divino* (in God's right) [570]. Diminishing clerical pretensions to power rather pointedly, Hobbes likens the role of a pastor to that of a crier or a herald who communicates by proclaiming but does not command [531]. Moreover, his delegated ecclesiastic authority may be withdrawn when the sovereign deems it fitting, just as a father of a household may terminate the services of his house chaplain.

The success of Hobbes's argument for sovereign ecclesiastic authority hinges on showing that overall responsibility for public religion in the commonwealth lies within the sovereign's commission. By tying ecclesiastic authority to the covenant founding the commonwealth, he returns power over public religion to the sovereign's authority. Hobbes insists that there is no universal commonwealth, no spiritual kingdom, and only one unity of the people with one locus of power in the commonwealth, legitimized through the people's consent.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

[1]R.H.S. Crossman, Government and the Governed (London: Christophers, 1939), p. 57.

[2]Hanna Pitkin, "Obligation and Consent - I," American Political Science Review 59 (December 1965), p. 991.

[3]Crossman, Government and the Governed, p. 17.

[4]Tuck, Hobbes, p. 86.

CHAPTER IV

THE CIVIL AND ECCLESIASTIC COMMONWEALTH

Hobbes's image of Leviathan, borrowed from Scriptures[1] to depict the supremacy of sovereign power in the civil and ecclesiastic commonwealth, is offensive to many readers. Richard Tuck offers the view that Hobbes chose the beast purposely to offend the religious establishment.[2] Nevertheless, when used as a political symbol to represent the sovereign's matchless power, Leviathan need not inspire fear and loathing. As his "Introduction" to Leviathan suggests [82], Hobbes is not interested in writing about a commonwealth in which the sovereign's actions should be barbaric, but about an orderly and commodious society whose political leadership is as bound as its subjects to obey divine laws of nature dictating charity and justice.

In her article, ""Hobbes's Subject as Citizen," Mary Dietz argues against the view that Hobbes's civil and ecclesiastic commonwealth is based on a "despotic model" where sheer power alone sustains the sovereign;[3] instead, Leviathan should be read not as a treatise about absolute despotism but as a blueprint for a finer kind of society.[4] David Gauthier concurs and points out that clues to Hobbes's intentions lie in Leviathan, Chapters 22 to 25 and 28, revealing that "Hobbes intends no totalitarian system or arbitrary despotism, but rather an enlightened monarchy, authoritarian but benevolent, offering the subjects . . . ample opportunity to make known their needs and grievances before the seats of power."[5]

I believe that a willingness to accept a more benign conception of Leviathan affords the reader a better appreciation of Hobbes's argument for secularization of religious and ethical issues. In this chapter, I will offer such an interpretation of Hobbes's intentions through a model of Hobbes's vision of a Christian civil and ecclesiastic commonwealth.

In the model, I will show that Hobbes aims to destabilize the powerful ecclesiastic establishment by presenting the sovereign as not merely the symbolic but the actual Defender of the Faith, and the commonwealth's best hope for the maintenance of divine law. Traditional elements of religion are redrawn (but not replaced) in the commonwealth's hierarchical structure, and the sovereign is firmly entrenched in the ecclesiastic roles of supreme prophet and pastor. I will address criticism of Hobbes's use of Scriptures to defend Leviathan's ecclesiastic authority by arguing that this use is consistent with his position that Scriptural interpretation must be supported by reason. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of Hobbes's view that the human desire for religion in itself is not irrational, despite the irrationality of certain religious practices which impede progress toward rational religion in society.

A. The Commonwealth as a Corporate Structure

Hobbes's own statements about the sovereign's civil and ecclesiastic functions provide the framework for a model of the commonwealth's organizational structure. This model reflects Hobbes's vision of the commonwealth not as an autocratic fiefdom but as a modern corporate organization. The sovereign is situated at the apex of the structure, yet Leviathan is also an entity created by the multitude he represents and whose will he enacts and enforces. He gains his awful power, unrivalled anywhere in the commonwealth, from the accumulated power of the individuals whose "person" he

bears on his broad frame. Thus, if one attempted to create a flow chart of the commonwealth's corporate structure it would end up looking very much like the illustration of Leviathan in the book's frontispiece, with individual members of the commonwealth gaining their unity from his body.

Keith Brown's speculative analysis of the frontispiece illustration, which he describes as an "emblem prefacing a highly rationalistic, anti-ecclesiastic work," draws attention to Hobbes's close involvement with its production. Brown writes that the drawing ought to be seen as a reflection of Hobbes's notion of sovereign authority and, in itself, an object worthy of scholarly study.[6] M.M. Goldsmith confirms that Hobbes took a keen interest in all the illustrations appearing in his works.[7] Whereas Brown speculates that "the outward-looking faces" of Leviathan's subjects express Hobbes's view "that what Leviathan wills is what we will,"[8] Goldsmith is content to note that the illustration expresses with clarity Hobbes's notion of unity of the individuals of the commonwealth into one person.[9]

What is the political significance of this unity? I believe it is meant to show Leviathan's subjects as voluntarily adhering, not clinging abjectly, to the sovereign. According to David Gauthier, Hobbes wants to base the commonwealth on a positive relationship between the governor and the governed, and makes a case in Leviathan for society as a "real union, expressed in the person of the sovereign which contains that of each member of the society."[10] Stephen comments that Hobbes's meaning is that Leviathan represents the multitude "in the sense that whatever he does is taken to be done by them . . . as though he was their volition incorporated."[11] In effect, it is the people's will that the sovereign, who gains his power from their wills, should hold ecclesiastic authority. This conclusion justifies and solidifies sovereign ecclesiastic authority for, as Reik observes, "the prince, in order to be truly sovereign . . . must be sovereign over every corporate body or organized group within the kingdom."[12]

With "sword in one hand and crozier in the other," Leviathan in the illustration aptly represents Hobbes's doctrine ascribing civil and religious supremacy in the commonwealth to the sovereign.[13] Hobbes considers that it behooves the sovereign, with the informed support of the citizenry, to resist usurpation by churchmen of that authorized power.

B. Divine Law in the Christian Commonwealth

Writing in defence of a civil society which embraces the politics of faith, Hobbes explains that public decision-making over religious doctrine is not an original notion. He writes that "from the first institution of Gods kingdome, to the Captivity, the Supremacy of Religion, was in the same hand with that of the Civill soveraignty" [509]. Moreover, Hobbes is not the one to have suggested bringing religion under civil control in England; through their political covenant the English people have already given the sovereign authority to make Scripture into secular positive law, and to approve or disapprove Scriptural interpretation.

In determining whether or not Hobbes was a Christian, readers may overlook his interest in the maintenance of divine law in the commonwealth. Pogson Smith, for instance, has concluded from Hobbes's assignment of ecclesiastic power to the sovereign that he despised "all that deluded race who dreamt of a law whose seat is the bosom of God."[14] Although Hobbes casts doubt on the capability and past performance of ecclesiastics to maintain divine law (or even recognize God's word where it appears in Scriptures) he, nevertheless, emphasizes the importance of divine law as the foundation for civil law, seeking to persuade the reader that divine law is best protected from destruction by the sovereign's "generall Providence" [376].

Against criticism that with the civil sovereign determining doctrine all will soon have no faith at all,[15] Hobbes declares that divine law, paradoxically, is under siege from the very people claiming to uphold it: the churchmen. Ignorant and venal clerics alike threaten the maintenance of divine law, including unlearned Scriptural interpreters, those who identify their dreams, imagination and madness for divine revelation, and religious charlatans who "pretend to such Divine testimonies, falsely, and contrary to their own consciences" [426]. Hobbes declares that left to their own devices and unchecked by the civil power, churchmen will eventually spell the death of divine law in the commonwealth.

C. The Role of Clergy in the Commonwealth

In light of such criticisms, can the clergy possibly serve Hobbes's commonwealth? If so, how will they serve and what is their position in the model? In Chapters II and III, I argued that Hobbes considers that clerics are not empowered either by natural superiority or consent of the people to issue the final word on matters of Scriptural interpretation and standards of righteous and unrighteous. I will now show that Hobbes's conception of the commonwealth's organizational structure finds independent claims to authority out of line with the churchmen's actual hierarchical position. The churchmen have a place in the ecclesiastic arm of sovereign authority, not at the top of a pyramid of ecclesiastic power as is commonly believed and as they claim.

It is clear that for practical reasons the sovereign cannot assume all duties of the ecclesiastic function, and clergy may therefore act in a ceremonial or consultative role in the area of religion. But, as I noted in Chapter III, Hobbes writes that the clergy are subordinate to the sovereign and whatever ecclesiastic power they exercise is delegated

only. Where they overstep that commission, churchmen act as illegitimate rivals to the sovereign authority. As a flagrant example, churchmen have created impositions against religious liberty where none existed by efforts to "impropriate the Preaching of the gospell to one certain Order of men, where the Laws have left it free" [701].

The model of Hobbes's commonwealth has no place for the ecclesiastic establishment's invention of an internal hierarchy demanding respect and obedience by the community of believers. If the churchmen were rendered powerless to command, as Hobbes recommends, popes, pastors and bishops alike would be recognized merely as teachers of the decided-upon doctrines of Christianity, officiators of ceremonial occasions, and elected officials of their congregations. They would act in the capacity of religious workers subordinate to the sovereign's ecclesiastic authority (in effect, ordinary citizens), with no authority to command or incite other citizens to act in ways contrary to the civil law of the commonwealth, being subject to censure by that law as well as morally obliged by the law of nature to support civil authority in the commonwealth.

In Part II, Hobbes warned about the enervating effect on the artificial man, Leviathan, of "Corporations; which are as it were many lesser Common-wealths in the bowels of a greater, like wormes in the entrayles of a naturall man" [375]. Although overtly referring to the invasive power of towns and corporate estates, Hobbes's term "lesser commonwealths" can be applied in the same manner to religious institutions whose exercise of unauthorized power tends to enfeeble the state.

Grouping religious institutions, as Hobbes does, with factions is bound to provoke opposition. By asserting claims to command Christian citizens, the ecclesiastic establishment does not consider itself to be a faction illegitimately competing with the sovereign's mandate but the authorized communicator of divine law and moral standards. To Hobbes, nevertheless, it is absurd that there could be a commonwealth within a commonwealth, just as it is absurd that there could be sovereignty within

sovereignty,[16] and therefore dismisses claims to independent church power as entirely without foundation.

D. Scriptures as Myth in the Commonwealth

It has been suggested that in his efforts to diminish the supernatural basis of Scriptural interpretation, Hobbes seeks to diminish the importance of Scriptures themselves. David Johnston takes the position that in writing about prophetic religion in the way that he does, Hobbes considers Scriptures destined for obsolescence. He comments: "And if miracles have ceased because men have finally become sufficiently enlightened to see through them, might not the same fate await the Christian Scriptures as well?"[17]

Johnston acknowledges the lack of evidence to support his supposition that Hobbes would welcome the demise of Scriptures in the Christian commonwealth. (He suggests, as the reason, Hobbes's fear of the danger such an outright declaration would pose to his personal security.) In my view, the lack of evidence in Leviathan also can be interpreted in a way that contradicts Johnston's conclusion. Hobbes's attention to Scriptures throughout Leviathan and his critique, not of their errors but of their interpretation, provide grounds on which to dispute such a claim.

Johnston's assertion might be supportable if we accept his argument that Hobbes sees myth as deceit, and Scriptures as "a history of subterfuge and deception."[18] I do not believe this is Hobbes's position. I hope to show that Hobbes takes a different, more political perspective to Scriptures. Specifically, Hobbes considers their message to be not only a means to communicate social values in a Christian commonwealth but a credible basis for the sacred part of its public myth. In arguing this, I hope to counter

Johnston's claim that Hobbes denies the continued importance of Scriptures in a modern commonwealth and renders them obsolete.

It seems to me that the difficulty presented by Johnston's position depends largely on the way in which one sees myth. I hope to develop another view of myth: one that allows Hobbes to accept Scriptures not as deceitful (despite their susceptibility to "mischievous"[19] and erroneous interpretations) but as a vehicle for bringing meaning to things both complicated and obscure. A point of view that sees the connection between Scriptures and myth as a reputable and legitimate link is advanced by Northrop Frye. Frye explains that the Bible "traditionally [has been] . . . assumed to be the rhetoric of God, accommodated to human intelligence and coming through human agents."[20] Scriptures contribute in a powerful way to the "unified mythology," or public myth, of a society by coordinating and disseminating a kind of knowledge: the way to righteous living.[21] I believe that when the "mythology" of Scriptures is looked at in this way, Hobbes's non-literal interpretation of Scriptures must be seen not as a rejection, but an acknowledgment of their value for transmitting ideas to the citizens of the commonwealth.

Because the purpose of myth is to teach something, it is a unique kind of fiction. Whereas a lie implies secrecy, there is a participatory, open nature to public myth; it is a fiction in which all members of a particular society (even thorough-going rogues) can take part. Even though all who reason can know that, as Bay writes, "the argument that every law represents the will of all, or the will of the majority is empirically false,"[22] yet the overriding value of the fiction can be recognized and appreciated.

In emphasizing that political obedience is implicit in being a good Christian, is Hobbes creating a legend to bring citizens to submission to political authority? In this connection, it is important to consider his statement about submission, defined "not [as

submission] of the Intellectual faculty, to the Opinion of any other man" but as an autonomous choice we make.[23] Although "Sense, Memory, Understanding, Reason, and Opinion are not in our power to change" [410] we do have independent power over our will. Citizens regularly accept and deal with myth in various aspects of their lives. They cannot be deluded into belief because there is liberty to choose otherwise; consequently, the decision to believe (or disbelieve, and pay lip service to) all or any part of the public myth is an autonomous act. Realizing and accepting an element of myth in public policy, without feeling cynical about knowing it, is part of social living; through an act of will we yield and place our "Trust, and Faith . . . in him that speaketh, though the mind be incapable of any Notion at all from the words spoken" [ibid.]. John Simmons writes, in this connection:

> I do not think that many of us can honestly say that we regard our political lives as a process of working together and making necessary sacrifices for the purpose of improving the common lot . . . it must be a rare individual who regards himself as engaged in an ongoing cooperative venture, obeying the law because fair play demands it, and with all of the citizens of his state as fellow participants.[24]

If confronted, nevertheless, many of us would say we *were* engaged in this sort of venture. The inspirational sovereign's rhetoric of Queen Elizabeth II's annual televised message, or of the U.S. President's State of the Union Address are messages reaffirming the unified mythology of the societies to which they are directed.

Hobbes's point, in promoting rational interpretation of Scriptures as the basis of the commonwealth's sacred myth, is that we ought to recognize and deal with all kinds of myth in an informed fashion. If we swallow a myth whole we are gullible and not of the proper stuff of which enlightened citizens are made. (However, if we believe none of it we are cynical in a way that obstructs the aims of the commonwealth.) The more

rational a myth appears, the more easily it will be accepted and maintained. A problem develops if a myth develops irrationally, and becomes too powerful to yield to reason. Irrational religion is an example; it becomes a counter-productive force in the commonwealth because, being unbelievable, it eventually will become an anachronism, and subject to disrespect. Much of what Hobbes writes in Leviathan about the negative aspects of rhetoric is not an attack on rhetoric itself, but a criticism of its misuse by those who perpetrate untruths in religious doctrine which encourages cavalier attitudes toward what is declared to be the word of God.

In short, the fact that Scriptures are treated as myth does not mean that Hobbes seeks to render them obsolete, as David Johnston suggests. Nor is there evidence that Hobbes seeks to undermine the Scriptures as deceitful in themselves, only evidence that he seeks to reinterpret them in order to overcome the effects of deceitful or negligent interpretations.

E. Prophecy in the Corporate Commonwealth

Hobbes has written that "the word of God delivered by Prophets is the main principle of Christian politiques" (409). But who shall be the prophet and, since Hobbes so often discredits prophets, how can he justify the necessity for prophecy in the modern Christian commonwealth?

As we found in the case of myth, a different way of looking at Hobbes's understanding of the elements of religion allows a clearer understanding of his intentions. In its usual connotation, prophecy refers to prognostication; however, Hobbes notes that in its Scriptural use, prophet "is most frequently used in the sense of speaking from God to the People," or interpreting and disseminating what is determined

to be the word of God [456]. Applying this definition to prophecy allows the reader to reconcile Hobbbes's frequently negative description of prophets with his proposition that the need exists, as it did in Moses' time, for a chief prophet in the nation.

Chapter II differentiated between Hobbes's descriptions of "the word of God" as revealed word ("from God") and doctrine ("about God"). I will now show that in Hobbes's model of the Christian commonwealth, the sovereign performs functions relating to both these concepts through his dual roles of chief prophet and chief pastor. As prophet, the sovereign interprets Scriptures by deciding on their meaning and about what is to be considered God's word. As chief pastor, the sovereign supervises religious education, or teaching about things decided upon about God.

Hobbes has written disparagingly about prophets, even characterizing them as liars [467]. Confusion over his conflicting statements concerning prophets can be resolved, however, by noting that Hobbes differentiates between two types of prophets, and casts aspersions on only one kind.

In Deut. 13:1, and elsewhere in Scriptures, the terms "prophet" and "dreamer of dreams" have been used interchangeably [461]. This category of prophet (which Hobbes discredits quite thoroughly) includes both self-styled prophets who appear bewitched by their own dreams and false prophets who attempt to bewitch others by the performance of alleged miracles which actually are magic. There is another type of prophetic function, however, of which Hobbes clearly approves. It resembles that of Moses and his assistant prophets, and is served by a prophet of "perpetuall calling" [469].

Hobbes writes that in the ancient Hebrew nation, the marks of a true prophet were the performance of miracles and preaching doctrine in conformity to the law [413]. In modern times, miracles no longer occur and the only mark of a prophet of perpetual calling is "wise and learned interpretation, and carefull ratiocination" of Scriptures [414]. Prophecy, as Hobbes prefers to use the term, is equivalent to rational Scriptural

interpretation by a pragmatic leader with authority to "prophesy," or interpret their meaning and decide what is to be considered God's word. The sovereign need not declare he speaks by supernatural event to justify speaking according to God's will; in fact, there is no "intelligible" evidence that prophets have ever been spoken to supernaturally [463]. Nor does the sovereign prophet need to be a devout person; the word of God, Hobbes comments, can be revealed through ordinary, not necessarily righteous, people [468].

Although the sovereign's prophetic duties obviously are delegated through appointed interpreters of canonical texts, Hobbes offers rhetorical evidence from Scriptures to justify limiting modern-day prophecy to only one prophet in each nation, explaining that subservience of clergy to the sovereign prophet is styled after the seventy prophets in the time of Moses who acted as his deputies and "prophecyed as Moses would have them" [464]. The sovereign is solely responsible for identifying divine pronouncements because "it is he that maketh them Laws" [575-576], and it is he who is solely accountable to God if the civil laws do not conform to the divine law of nature ("a better Principle of Right and Wrong, than the word of any Doctor who after all is only a man") [596].

Prophetic religion continues in its important teaching role in Hobbes's model of the commonwealth, but ultimate responsibility for Scriptural interpretation passes out of the religious establishment's control to Leviathan, acting as supreme prophet.

The sovereign's other major ecclesiastic function, as chief pastor in the commonwealth, involves teaching what is determined to be God's word and administering religious practices. Consider the outrage at Hobbes's notion of sovereigns as pastors of the people. Hobbes's reply is that although sovereign right to pastoral power is not generally recognized because the sovereign is seldom seen exercising pastoral duties, the right remains an integral part of the office of a sovereign in his

particular jurisdiction [570-571], even that of a heathen king [574]. By custom only, ordination, baptism, and consecration have been delegated to the ministry.

In Leviathan, Hobbes endorses an essentially tribal (although not primitive) church. The covenant founding the commonwealth implies that religious doctrine is agreed upon either actively or tacitly between the constituents of that particular society, and its ecclesiastic functions are administered through the office of the sovereign who is authorized as its prophet and pastor.

My argument has been based on Hobbes's narrow, though technically acceptable, definition of prophecy as the interpretation of what is to be deemed God's word. Although Hobbes rarely extends the meaning of prophecy to include prognostication, there are grounds, in my view, to make this extension based on Hobbes's discussions of the sovereign's ecclesiastic function. In the everyday life of the commonwealth, Leviathan mediates between subjectively meaningful interpretations of reality[25] that divide the individuals who make up a citizenry. His subjects' acceptance of his interpretation of a reality that can be shared is a powerful political tool. Just as powerful is the sovereign's right to interpret the future or "prophesy." Power accrues to the one who interprets the future whose uncertainty weighs so heavily on Christian citizens anxious about salvation. To control interpretations of both present reality and the future is to hold the whole commonwealth in one's hands.

F. Hobbes's Selective Use of Scriptures

In light of Hobbes's own selective use of Scriptural texts, his declaration that other writers, lacking knowledge of the "main Designe" of Scriptures [626], offer erroneous and usually self-serving interpretations has raised suspicion that he quotes

texts cynically for tactical gains. Stephen, for instance, asks if Hobbes was "sincere or laughing in his sleeve."[26] More recently, Farr has commented that while disclaiming self-interest, Hobbes focuses with relentless rhetoric on references upholding political obedience while ignoring many other texts, for example, the apocalyptic message of Revelation.[27] Using Hobbes's own phrase, Farr declares that Hobbes casts "atomes of Scripture, as dust before mens eyes" to deliberately obscure the true meaning of Scriptures.[28]

It can be shown that Hobbes's selective use of Scriptures need not be considered insincere, nor can it be proven that he reinterprets Scriptures for Christians while believing not a word of them. His use is consistent both with his own requirement for rational religious interpretation and his declaration that Christians need not accept all the texts at face value. Indeed, the forms of texts Hobbes cites in several places in Leviathan (The Fall, and the story of Job's sufferings, for example) are recognized by him as allegory and parable, symbolic styles used as vehicles for instruction and rhetorical persuasion which depend not on literal interpretation, but on an examination of their inner meaning. Hobbes considers that literal, unsophisticated interpretations of the Bible misunderstand its symbolic language and thus compromise the integrity of its meaning.

Since there were ongoing revisions to Scriptures from early times and within Hobbes's lifetime, reflecting editorial tastes and ecclesiastic philosophy and policy, it is not so surprising that Hobbes would examine Scriptures non-literally and selectively. In so doing, Hobbes works within a scholarly tradition that recognizes the Bible's varied components such as chronicles of history and genealogy, accounts of dreams and prognostications, allegory and parable, wise counsel and traditional wisdom turned into law, and also its mystery.

Hobbes's acceptance of the apocryphal version of Hebrew history in Esdras II

[423] (recommended by the Church of England in 1563 for its instructional value, though not "to establish any doctrine"),[29] exemplifies his position that the Scriptures gain their legitimacy only on account of civil power. Hobbes notes that the law written by Moses was reportedly lost on two occasions and, when found again, only approved as the law of God by sovereign authority [549]. The sovereign was not bound to approve it; he could have approved only a portion of the texts, or questioned their authenticity and rejected all of them. The decision to restore the law as canonical law was a political decision. In updating the reception of the last "rewrite" of Old Testament law to more recent times (while not directly contradicting his pastoral commander, the sovereign head of the Church of England) Hobbes further weakens the notion of a literal interpretation of Bible history.

To answer Farr's criticism that Hobbes specifically ignores the apocalyptic text, Revelation, I will show that the paucity of selections from Revelation in Leviathan noted by Farr is coherent with Hobbes's aims for a number of reasons.

First, The Book of Revelation is prophetic, but Leviathan notes that the days of the old-style prophecy have ended, fulfilled by the coming of Christ. If one believes that Christ is the culmination of prophecy, one also must believe that, after Him, all revelation ceases.

Moreover, in Revelation, God and Satan are in a power struggle, with Satan identified as the cause of all sufferings. Hobbes's stand on Satan is quite clear; he declares that the Devil must be defined either as a fancy or as any enemy of the community who seeks to break down law and order. At any rate, attributing responsibility for evil to Satan and demons is an irrational and unacceptable attempt to relieve man of individual responsibility as a citizen.

Finally, Hobbes's theory cannot accommodate either Revelation's threat of God's wrath upon those who obey the emperors or its promise of eternal rewards for Christians

prepared to die as martyrs rather than worship the official gods of Rome. Support for sovereign power is one of Hobbes's two requirements for Christian salvation and therefore something that (theoretically, at least) ought to please God, not anger Him. Encouragement of Christian martyrdom in the face of religious oppression is a call for political disobedience, incompatible with Hobbes's theory that obedience to the sovereign power is divinely commanded through the laws of nature.

Clearly, to choose quotations from Revelation would be inconsistent with Hobbes's requirement for rational doctrine. He tells us frankly what his approach to Scriptures must be, and his selection of texts, mined for utility, follows this openly-prescribed agenda. In Hobbes's time and today, suspicion rises up to greet the notion of seeking "usefulness" in Scriptures. Yet, in Hobbes's view, how can one rationally judge Scriptural texts except as prescriptions for Christian conduct and guides to rational worship?

G. A New Route for Religion in the Christian Commonwealth

The reader can confidently assume, from Hobbes's discussions in Leviathan and his other works, that he considers a degree of rational religion as useful and necessary in the commonwealth. No open worship implies a "denying of the Divine Power, or atheism."[30] But how much religion satisfies the requirements of a rational ecclesiastic policy? And what would that religion be like?

A useful way to begin is to consider Hobbes's criticism, expressed in Behemoth, that religion is not the same as the ecclesiastic establishment, with its power-seeking motive; it is not to be "taken for the same thing with divinity, . . . [for such common thinking] gave advantage to the clergy."[31] Rational religious doctrine has a place in the

commonwealth, nevertheless, he writes about the clergy that "to believe in Christ is nothing with them, unless you believe as they bid you. Charity is nothing with them, unless it be charity and liberality to them."[32]

Hobbes begins Chapter XII, Leviathan, devoted exclusively to religion, by declaring that religion is a creation of man and exists nowhere without man [168]. Although Hobbes has written that "anxiety for the future time" motivates the formation of religion [167] in his view mankind's creation has outstripped its original purpose. In the development of religion, most often, prudential considerations have overcome the disinterested reasoning which Hobbes favours, with the result that reasoning about first causes is halted at an elementary, superstitious level. The result of this premature cessation of reasoning is the superstitious religion Hobbes deplores.

Is it not absurd, Hobbes asks, to take for the heart of religion not the simple honoring of a First Mover but, instead, the artificially-created attributes of God made in man's image, and the ranks, rites and ceremonies of the churchmen themselves? Christians, unfortunately, are encouraged by the ecclesiastics, either carelessly or deliberately, to believe that artifices of religion are real, and thus they come to fear their own creations.

Hobbes suggest that in its development, religion can follow either of two divergent paths. A spiritual traveller who moves beyond an initial prudential motivation, impelled by the "desire to know why, and how" [124], will reach a different place than one motivated (and hemmed in) by fear of failure or loss of security. Natural religion, a simple acknowledgment of one god, force, or first mover, unembellished by the heavy trappings of useless doctrine, is discovered through the use of profound reasoning. It ought to be the goal of a modern civil and ecclesiastical commonwealth.

Hobbes does not state outright in Leviathan an opinion about Independency until Chapter 47, and here it is put forth as an ideal, *"if it [religion] be without contention"*

[italics mine]. Hobbes feels strongly that religion is a contentious force in the commonwealth: so great, as he writes elsewhere, that his motivation in writing Leviathan in English was to give wider exposure to the fact "that so many monstrous crimes should be put down to the commands of God."[33]

If there is a road to religious independency in Hobbes's notion of a civil and ecclesiastic commonwealth, it will not be travelled without first passing through the stage of a rational, national religion where clerics no longer dictate to the people and to sovereigns. Hobbes sees formidable obstacles impeding the hoped-for progression toward rational religion. One barrier is created by permeation of irrational elements into the teachings of philosophy and religion which keep Christians in ignorance and fear. Another, political, barrier is the strong resistance by churchmen including leaders of the national church to moving from a position of enormous influence to being the sovereign's church and, as such, politically mute and powerless.

I believe that the model I have presented of Hobbes's vision of a civil and ecclesiastic commonwealth, though speculative, fairly presents his position on the ecclesiastic function of sovereign authority. Because of the universal power of religion, Hobbes feels compelled to apply a fundamental political question: "Who shall rule?" to the area of religion. He places elements of religion within the commonwealth's organizational framework, regarding organized religion as a facet of the secular life of a community, not as an independent power base.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

[1]The Bible, Job 41:33.

[2]Tuck, Hobbes, pp. 29-30.

[3]Mary G. Dietz, "Hobbes's Subject as Citizen," in Thomas Hobbes and Political Theory, ed. Mary G. Dietz (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1990), pp. 94-95.

[4]ibid., p. 95.

[5]David P. Gauthier, The Logic of Leviathan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 138-139.

[6]Keith Brown, "The Artist of the Leviathan Title-page," The British Library Journal 4 (Spring 1978): 24-36.

[7]M.M. Goldsmith, "Picturing Hobbes's Politics," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 44 (1981): 232-237.

[8]Brown, "The Artist of the Leviathan Title-page," p. 32.

[9]Goldsmith, "Picturing Hobbes's Politics," p. 234.

[10]Gauthier, The Logic of Leviathan, p. 112.

[11]Stephen, Hobbes, p. 196.

[12]Reik, The Golden Lands of Thomas Hobbes, p. 118.

[13]Goldsmith, "Picturing Hobbes's Politics," p. 234.

[14]Pogson Smith, The Philosophy of Hobbes, p. xii.

[15]Tuck, Hobbes, p. 89.

[16]see p. 41 above.

[17]Johnston, The Rhetoric of Leviathan, p. 181.

[18]ibid., p. 180.

[19]Stephen, Hobbes, p. 31.

[20]Northrop Frye, The Great Code: The Bible and Literature (Toronto: Academic Press, 1982), pp. 28-29.

[21]ibid., p. 51.

[22]Christian Bay and Charles C. Walker, Civil Disobedience: Theory and Practice (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1975), p. 4.

[23]see p. 42 above.

[24]A. John Simmons, Moral Principles and Political Obligation (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 140.

[25]Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966), pp. 19-22.

[26]Stephen, Hobbes, p. 224.

[27]Farr, "Atomes of Scripture: Hobbes and the Politics of Biblical Interpretation", p. 181.

[28]ibid., p. 173; also Encyclopedia Americana, 1972 ed., s.v. "Revelation, The Book of," by Martin Rist.

[29]Encyclopedia Americana, 1972 ed., s.v. "Apocrypha," by Frederick C. Grant.

[30]Hobbes, De Cive, ed. with Introduction, Sterling Lamprecht (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1949), p. 193.

[31]Hobbes, E.W., vol. 6, Behemoth, p. 235.

[32]ibid.

[33]Howard Warrender, ed. with Introduction, De Cive: The Latin Version, by Thomas Hobbes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 13.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Hobbes describes the targeted readers of Leviathan in various ways. "In "The Introduction," he speaks to "men in power" and "men of low degree," but also to "he that is to govern a whole nation" [83]. At the end of the work, Hobbes addresses "any that desires the continuance of Publique Peace," "all men" and "the Publique Judge of Doctrine" [729]. Because Hobbes never declares that he writes exclusively to one sort of reader and because Leviathan's stance is remarkably free of class, his intended audience bears investigation.

In this chapter, I will address the question of Hobbes's audience with the view to showing that Hobbes's rhetoric in Leviathan, Parts III and IV is directed mainly at the sovereign, the only one he considers has real authority and power to implement change in the commonwealth. I will examine Hobbes's attitude toward the national church establishment, and negative reaction by its leaders to Hobbes's theory of sovereign ecclesiastic authority.

Hobbes's notions concerning the politics of religion unsettle not only the religious establishment, but ordinary Christian citizens accustomed to receiving religious doctrine from the churchmen. I will show that, in his defence, Hobbes challenges the reader to consider the purposes for which the artifices of commonwealth and religion were founded. In so doing, she will recognize the absurdity of considering organized religion as an authentic power group in the commonwealth.

A. Hobbes's Targeted Audience

In Hobbes's own time, when it was noted that Leviathan "took so much with many Gentlemen, and young students in the universities," a general assumption was made that Hobbes wrote for that readership.[1] Some recent scholarly discussions agree with such an assumption. Paul Johnson, for instance, presents evidence disproving claims for a mass readership in England during Hobbes's time to posit that the intended audience for Hobbes's rhetoric is not the common man,[2] but a special audience: the university-educated person who goes on to fill the ranks of the gentry and the clergy.[3] Johnson describes Hobbes's aim as a recommendation to sovereigns to include Leviathan in university curricula, but considers that political leaders are an intermediate audience only, with "the ultimate audience . . . the students in the universities."[4]

A strong case can be made, however, for the sovereign being the one whose good opinion of Leviathan most concerns Hobbes. As I pointed out in Chapter I, to consider Hobbes's rhetoric in Leviathan as merely a theological exercise and not as a largely political statement misreads Hobbes's intention. Arguments that Leviathan is especially intended for aspiring clergymen cannot be reconciled with the negative attitude towards clerics which underlies Hobbes's discussion of religion and religious dogma (with remarks positively subversive to organized religion). As early as Chapter 29, Hobbes fulminates concerning

> opinions, pernicious to Peace and Government . . . [which] have proceeded chiefly from the tongues, and pens of unlearned Divines; who joyning the words of Holy Scripture together, otherwise than is agreeable to reason, do what they can, to make men think, that Sanctity and Natural Reason, cannot stand together [367].

By unlearned divines, Hobbes obviously does not mean backward country pastors or

people at the bottom of their university theology class. Instead, he appears to condemn the vast majority of religious teachers and leaders. In view of Hobbes's criticisms of the religious establishment, why would entrenched ecclesiastics, presumably devoted to self-preservation, allow his "new wine" to poison their casks? And why would Hobbes trust them with the task of doctrinal revision?

In addition to barbs directed at shabby, erroneous scholarship in the universities, Leviathan contains a remarkable attack on the reputation of the philosophy schools, comparing the peripatetic walks for which they were named to "prating and loytering" [685]. A contemporary critic, Alexander Rosse, declared that Hobbes sought to reduce Aristotle's reputation as a philosopher because it stood in the way of Hobbes's own works being read in universities, sarcatically commenting in this regard: "Shall the beetle thrust the eagle out of his nest?"[5] In my view, to suggest that Hobbes was motivated to write Leviathan out of ambition and professional jealousy diminishes his purpose. It is true that Hobbes criticizes Aristotle for what he regards as meaningless words, for metaphysics riddled with supernatural elements and for word-splitting to explain the existence of an incorporeal soul, "which it may be he knew to be false Philosophy" [692]. He presents a cutting picture of philosophy being reduced to the role of handmaiden to the religious establishment, with truth veiled by absurdity. It is more likely, in view of Hobbes's admiration of Aristotle (noted by a number of commentators including Strauss)[6] that Hobbes's attack on "vain philosophy, derived . . . partly from Aristotle" [688] is directed at the schoolmen's employment of Aristotelean terms to substantiate religious dogma unacceptable to Hobbes.

Was Hobbes's criticism of the ecclesiastics timebound to his era? Crossman observes that Hobbes was "not the man to weave his theories under the pressures of circumstances."[7] Minogue, too, believes that Hobbes was not "engaged in the practical business of advocacy or justification" but in exploring his own wide-ranging political

philosophy.[8] Hobbes's confidence (or arrogance or carelessness) in critically bombarding established institutions certainly suggests that Leviathan is written more in the intellectual style of a philosopher with no axe to grind except to have his philosophy and ideas rise above the rest. His theme is that the politics of religion in the commonwealth is far too important to leave to the clerics, notwithstanding any offence his doctrine may cause.

The ideas which Hobbes proposes, especially in the "theological" Parts III and IV, are persuasively presented to anyone who will take them up. He considers them vital for the improvement of minds corrupted by erroneous doctrine, with a special layer of meaning for lovers of philosophy whom he describes in Elements of Philosophy Concerning Body as "some men, though but few, who are delighted with truth and strength of reason in all things."[9] Hobbes's stylistically low-key claim at the end of "A Review and Conclusion" that Leviathan could be "profitably printed, and more profitably taught in the Universities" if the authorities permit is more than a modest hope that his book would be included in university curricula. It is, instead, a rhetorical device to disarm his critics and establish credibility with his judges, especially the sovereign, in order to pave the way for acceptance of his theory of sovereign right. The sovereign, Hobbes's candidate for holder of ecclesiastic power in the commonwealth, is Leviathan's most important audience.

B. Hobbes and the Anglicans

A contemporary of Hobbes, university don (later Bishop) Seth Ward, dismissed Hobbes's criticism of the universities as hopelessly outdated, arguing that the scholasticism about which Hobbes complains had been eradicated through extensive

remodeling of the universities by Anglican administrations under commission of the civil authority.[10] Stephen remarks, in this connection, that Hobbes seemed unaware "of the remarkable change which had come over his own university . . . [which] had become the meeting place of a remarkable number of eminent and energetic teachers."[11] Stephen suggests that Hobbes' criticism of the theologians in the universities may have been been "muddled by his quarrel with the mathematicians over his claims to knowledge and with personal attacks."[12]

I would like to offer another possible explanation. Despairing of reform coming from within the religious establishment Hobbes, nevertheless, seeks to avoid criticizing doctrinal policies developed under the aegis of sovereign power (and thereby contradicting his own theory of political obligation abjuring direct criticism of sovereign power). Instead, he criticizes the universities and the "ignorant Schoolemen" who direct their curricula. What appears to be an anachronistic complaint against "Schoolemen" in Leviathan actually may be an attack on the Church of England itself, deflected off another target. It is clear that Hobbes's most strident attacks in Leviathan are reserved for the Roman Catholic Church and, to a lesser extent, the Presbyterians. Criticism of Anglican orthodoxy is more veiled, mainly consisting of references to "schoolemen," "unlearned Divines," or "some clerics." By foisting criticism of irrational doctrine and incitement to civil disobedience by the Anglican establishment onto the universities (and superficially onto ancient philosophy), Hobbes can avoid specifically naming the national church in his complaints.

This effort is not as successful as Hobbes might have hoped. His Anglican contemporaries, including former friends who thought he had shared their views, were greatly offended by Leviathan.[13] An influential Church of England cleric, Bishop Bramhall, accused Hobbes of employing sophistry and of betraying his membership in the university-trained community, writing

> It troubles me to see a Scholar one who hath been long admitted into the innermost closet of nature, and seene the hidden secrets of more subtile learning, so far to forget himself as to stile Schoole-learning no better than a plain Jargon, that is a senseles gibrish or a fustian language.[14]

Bramhall's critique astutely notes that Hobbes appears to confound his own declarations about a citizen's obligation to support doctrines approved by his sovereign, asking: "I demand then why TH is of a different mind from his sovereign, and from the laws of the land concerning the attributes of God and his decrees?"[15] (Rosamond Rhodes also observes that Hobbes's editing of the Ten Commandments, unsanctioned by the sovereign, could be considered as civil disobedience according to Hobbes's own theory.)[16]

In his rhetorical disclaimers, nevertheless, Hobbes announces that is writing as a counsellor only. Hobbes had contact all his life with people of influence in the commonwealth[17] and was not modest about his intellectual achievements or about a royal audience for his writings.

C. Why is Leviathan So Fearsome?

Leviathan's criticisms of religious practices are profoundly unsettling not only to the ecclesiastics but also ordinary Christian citizens. They denounce what seems natural about religious life. Hobbes not only reorients the source of ecclesiastic power toward the sovereign but, by removing the supernatural aspect of divine command, shakes the very foundation of Christian belief. For this reason, he was accused of heresy in cutting man off "from the direct apprehension of Deity."[18]

Hobbes, nevertheless, discounts any belief that God, like a puppet master, has the

affairs of the world in his hands, saying that if this were the case then the natural order of the world must be towards peace yet, indubitably, it is otherwise. There is no proof that our prayers are answered, or that good deeds are always rewarded and wrongdoing always punished in this world, for we notice all around us that the wicked prosper [398]. Although God, as a supremely powerful force, can affect our circumstances, Hobbes declares that events cannot be attributed with certainty to His hand.

Hobbes does not want his readers to believe that this world is only a waiting room leading into the afterlife, and so he addresses stubborn adherents to such a notion by making political attachment to the commonwealth one of the two necessary conditions for salvation, replacing religious orthodoxy with his political orthodoxy.

What is the reader of Leviathan to conclude about Hobbes's discussions of religious truth? The work takes us sometimes directly (but more often circuitously) into Hobbes's obsession, shared with men of learning of the seventeenth century, to expose the sleight-of-hand of those who would present the appearance of truth as truth itself. Religious institutions offer comfort through rituals that hide the frightening question that Job faced in contemplating the void: "Is this all there is?" But if humans cannot know what lies behind the veil of death, why must they accept another's tale in place of what their own reason or their own imagination suggests?

There is more than a hint of Utopia in Hobbes's "heaven on earth" described in Leviathan's Part III. In his description of the Kingdom of God on earth, the bodies which Christians achieving salvation will assume are almost, but not quite, spiritual (for spirit is a movement of the mind). The passions will be quieted; the unceasing human quest for physical satisfaction will be over. Hobbes's version of the hereafter reflects cerebral tastes, vaguely resembles a huge library with unlimited borrowing privileges. Why, however, should his version of Heaven be less acceptable than one with gilded thrones and pearly gates?

Hobbes stakes his reputation on the sovereign as final arbiter of all disputes in his particular jurisdiction. He asks the reader to consider that accepting the sovereign's "right reason" to resolve disputatious issues, including what is religious truth, is not necessarily an admission that the sovereign has attained truth. It is an acknowledgment that the "correct" view is not possible in all cases, and that a public "truth" arbitrarily has been chosen in the interests of peace and equity. The word of a final arbiter empowered to offer a definitive interpretation may not necessarily the wisest interpretation, although that would be the ideal situation. But arbitration is, by definition, arbitrary, whether administered by clerics or by the sovereign power.

It is possible to conclude that Hobbes considers the state's interest in the area of faith as not extending beyond a concern for actual conflict with the law. It is noteworthy that Hobbes does not scorn pious people, but suggests that private faith, like any other "inward thought, and beleef of men" is an effect of "the unrevealed will . . . of God" [500-501]. Although a citizen's private belief can never take precedence over the interests of the commonwealth, this need not be an issue unless expression of that belief collides with the interests of the commonwealth. Labouring the point somewhat, Hobbes writes that public religion is no great threat to private liberty because "profession with the tongue is but an externall thing, and no more then [sic] any other gesture whereby we signifie our obedience" [527-528].

Hobbes's argument is not as readily convincing as he might like it to be. The problem is that with the sovereign's assumption of ecclesiastic authority there is no guarantee of a more serene, commodious commonwealth. There is even the possibility that the secular leadership's attitude might lean toward repressive religion, so that Naaman's requirement of bowing to a foreign god [228] would be the rule, rather than the exception.

Hobbes's theory of sovereign ecclesiastic authority, unfortunately, leads to the

chilling prospect of the sovereign as censor in the commonwealth. In order to take his theory all the way, he must come over to the side of the sovereign even for the suppression of truth, despite his expression of real dismay at the suppression of Galileo's thought "by such men, as neither by lawfull authority, nor sufficient study, are competent Judges of the truth" [703]. The potentially oppressive sovereign authority over Scriptural interpretation suggests a fearsome threat to liberty. But Hobbes retorts: what of the tyranny of ecclesiastic authority as administered by the clerics? In his view, a belief that religion belongs under the firm control of the religious establishment inevitably puts Christians and Christian commonwealths firmly under its control. Instead, as his discussion of the unity of church as commonwealth shows, the situation should be reversed.

D. Artifices and Absurdities

Not all artifices, of course, tend to absurdity. Language, science, religion, and the commonwealth itself all have been created by mankind to meet specific needs. By reasoning correctly about the means to preserve peace, man has organized with his fellows into a social *cum* political unit with a recognizable locus of power, enforcement capability, and system of sanctions and rewards.

Hobbes explains that the 20th law of nature requires that the sovereign who protects his subjects in war also must be preserved in times of peace by support of the commonwealth's institutions, imperfect though they may be. Ironically, times of peace can be dangerous to the maintenance of that peace, because man's temporary feeling of security allows him to forget that it is the sovereign who maintains his security and defends the interests of the commonwealth which, theoretically, are his interests.

Apathy and ignorance are major threats to the survival of commonwealths, especially where "there ariseth such a Mist amongst their Subjects, that they know not a stranger that thrusteth himself into the throne of their lawfull Prince, from him whom they had themselves placed there" [631].

Hobbes declares that when citizens of a Christian commonwealth (the true authors of sovereign ecclesiastic authority) give allegiance to the artifice of organized religion, they act in a self-contradictory and absurd manner. Hobbes reminds the reader that the interconnectedness of people in society is through their covenant with one another. Identifying mankind's equality in nature as the basis of each individual's political equality, Hobbes also explains that by letting down the commonwealth the citizen in effect lets down his fellow man and denies his equality. There can be no affiliation with organized religion that ever could supersede the covenant of citizenship; therefore, it is an absurdity for Christian citizens to accept for command anything conflicting with the sovereign's law which they themselves have authored.

In the same vein, it is an absurdity to set up and maintain for religion (ostensibly meant to dispel mankind's fears and give solace against the void) a self-serving institution that not only fails to satisfy that need but gives mankind even more anxiety. For Hobbes, religion is an artifice of man which, unfortunately, often defeats the purpose for which it was intended and, like a laboratory-created monster in horror tales, grows to consider itself the master and not the creature.

Because right reason does not exist in nature, what is to be taken for right reason is the artificial or "public reason" of the bearer of sovereign power in a commonwealth. Remembering that it is artificial requires a highly developed form of reasoning, of course, lest mankind forget why the sovereign is supreme judge of all disputes. It is not because he is the wisest or the noblest, or even always right (for Hobbes never says any

of these things). Leviathan is *as* a "mortal god" on account of his awe-inspiring power, but he is never to be taken for a god, for we are his pattern.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

[1]Bowle, Hobbes and His Critics, p. 88.

[2]Dietz, "Hobbes's Subject as Citizen," pp. 95-96; also Johnston, The Rhetoric of Leviathan, p. 89.

[3]Paul Johnson,"Leviathan's Audience," in Thomas Hobbes de la Metaphysique à la Politique, ed. Morton Bertram and Michel Malherbe (Paris: Librairie Philosophique, J. Vrin, l989), pp. 221-235.

[4]ibid., p. 232.

[5]Bowle, Hobbes and His Critics, p. 68.

[6]Leo Strauss, The Political Philosophy of Hobbes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), p. 35.

[7]Crossman, Government and the Governed, p. 60.

[8]Kenneth Minogue, ed. with Introduction, Leviathan, by Thomas Hobbes (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., Everyman's Library, 1973), p. xxii.

[9]Thomas Hobbes, Elements of Philosophy Concerning Body. p. 6.

[10]Bowle, Hobbes and His Critics, p. 74.
In the Preface to his translation of The Elements of Law (pp. vii-viii), Toennies writes that Seth Ward is said to have been Hobbes's adversary and the person responsible for the unauthorized version of The Elements of Law being printed.

[11]Stephen, Hobbes, p. 51.

[12]ibid., p. 34.

[13]Tuck, Hobbes, p. 29.

[14]Bramhall, A Defence of True Liberty, p. 20.

[15]ibid., p. 252.

[16]Rhodes, "The Test of Leviathan," fn. 11, p. 202.

[17]Tuck, Hobbes, p. 4; p. 31.

[18]Bowle, Hobbes and His Critics, p. 64.

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